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**MYSELF AND
MY FRIENDS**



Edmund Dulac

LILLAH—BORNE BY THE WINGS OF LOVE
FROM THE WINGS OF THE STAGE

MYSELF AND MY FRIENDS

By
LILLAH McCARTHY, O.B.E.
(Lady Keeble)

WITH AN ASIDE BY
BERNARD SHAW



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DEDICATION

To "Freddie"
What's Mine is Thine

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AN ASIDE

By BERNARD SHAW

I WAS very intimately concerned in the chapter of theatrical history which is also a chapter of this autobiography of its leading actress. It did not seem an important chapter when we were making it; but now, twenty years after its close, it falls into perspective as a very notable one. I am often asked to write or speak of the development of the theatre, and to prophesy its future. I always reply that the theatre does not develop, and that it has, in the evolutionary sense, no future that will not repeat the past. From time to time dramatic art gets a germinal impulse. There follows in the theatre a spring which flourishes into a glorious summer. This becomes stale almost before its arrival is generally recognized; and the sequel is not a new golden age, but a barren winter that may last any time from fifteen years to a hundred and fifty. Then comes a new impulse; and the cycle begins again.

The impulse, like all creative impulses, is a mystery: that is, an unexplained phenomenon. Its outward and visible sign is a theatrical person of genius: a playwright or a player. The luckiest event is the coincidence of memorable playwriting with memorable acting. The present autobiography is the story of an actress who was caught by one of these germinal impulses; and, as it happened, I, as playwright, was its vehicle (or victim) when it stirred up the depths of our stagnant dramatic poetry and volatilized it into tragi-comedy in the last decade of the nineteenth century.

In 1889 the London stage had come into shattering collision with the Norwegian giant, Ibsen. I say shattering advisedly because nobody could follow up Ibsen. He knocked the fashionable drama of the day out of countenance without effectively replacing it, because his plays could never be forced on the

London theatre for more than a fortnight at a time except when some player made a personal success in them. It was this that distinguished his case from that of Wagner, who not only delivered an equally smashing attack on the old-fashioned Italian opera houses but supplanted their repertories by his own operas and music dramas so completely that at last no one would pay a penny to hear *Lucrezia Borgia* or *Semiramide* whilst money poured in for *Lohengrin*, *Die Meistersinger*, *Tristan*, and even for *The Ring*. Wagner conquered and took possession: Ibsen passed like a tornado and left nothing behind but ruin. When I say that he made even Shakespear contemptible to inveterate Shakespeareans like myself his effect on the standing of lesser playwrights may be imagined. They began to write unhappy plays, and, worse still, embittered plays. They lost their ease of handling and their sense of humor. They became a prey to doubts and compunctions which they could not define: above all, they lost their lightness of heart, without which nothing can succeed in the theatre except illiterate sob-stuff and police sensation. And the ground lost in this way was not occupied by Ibsen, who soon seemed as extinct as the least lucky of the playwrights he had destroyed.

And so the drama in London went staggering about crazily for fifteen years. Everybody wanted a new drama of Ibsenian novelty and importance, but pleasant and with plenty of laughs at the right side of the mouth. No such drama was forthcoming at the West End theatres. The playwrights were all shellshocked by the Norwegian broadside.

There was, however, one notable exception; and that was no less a person than myself. Ibsen had not shocked me in the least. Why was I immune? Because an earlier enchanter had taken me far outside the bounds of middle class idealism within which Ibsen's bombshells were deadly. I am not by nature a good bourgeois any more than Shelley was; and I was a strong Shelleyan long before I ever heard of Ibsen from William Archer. And long after Shelley and yet still longer before Ibsen, came Karl Marx, whose indictment of bourgeois civilization, based wholly on English facts, utterly destroyed its high moral

reputation and started throughout Europe a fire of passionate resolution to dethrone it and tear down its idols and laws and government, compared to which the commotion raised by Ibsen's "Doll's House" and "Ghosts" was a storm in a teacup. It is significant that though our press made a prodigious fuss about Ibsen as he sent the revolted daughters of the business and professional classes flying from the domestic hearth "to live their own lives" in all directions, the leaders of the proletarian movement which has overthrown Capitalism in Russia took no notice of Ibsen. They were not unaware of him; for at the first performance of "A Doll's House" in England, on a first floor in a Bloomsbury lodging house, Karl Marx's youngest daughter played Nora Helmer; and I impersonated Krogstad at her request with a very vague notion of what it was all about. But there is all the difference in the world between welcoming a dramatic poet as a useful auxiliary, which was the Marxist attitude towards Ibsen, and being wakened from a complacent satisfaction with Victorian respectability by a moral earthquake which threatened to bring every suburban villa crashing to the ground in a hurricane of Feminism and Anti-Clericalism and anti-Idealism.

I had the advantage of that difference. I had read Karl Marx fourteen years before Lenin did; and the shock of Ibsen's advent did not exist for me, nor indeed for anyone who was not living in the Victorian fools' paradise. All the institutions and superstitions and rascalities that Ibsen attacked had lost their hold on me. Consequently, whilst the fashionable Victorian playwrights who had never heard of Marx were reeling all over the place from the Ibsen shock, my self-possession and gaiety and grip of the situation were completely undisturbed; and when in response to various external suggestions and pressures I began writing plays, they were just as amusing and undistracted as if Ibsen had never been born. But they were also so strange to the theatre of that day, kept alive by a little group of fashionable actors who brought their artistic skill and attractiveness to the rescue of every successive rehash of the adulteries and duels which were the worn-out stock-in-trade of

the Parisian stage and its London imitation, that when little private clubs of connoisseurs like the Independent Theatre and the Stage Society ventured on single performances of them, the Strand (as theatre-land was then called) could not accept them as plays at all, and repudiated them as pamphlets in dialogue form by a person ignorant of the theatre and hopelessly destitute of dramatic faculty.

Behind the scenes, too, I had my difficulties. In a generation which knew nothing of any sort of acting but drawing-room acting, and which considered a speech of more than twenty words impossibly long, I went back to the classical style and wrote long rhetorical speeches like operatic solos, regarding my plays as musical performances precisely as Shakespear did. As a producer I went back to the forgotten heroic stage business and the exciting or impressive declamation I had learnt from oldtimers like Ristori, Salvini, and Barry Sullivan. Yet so novel was my post-Marx post-Ibsen outlook on life that nobody suspected that my methods were as old as the stage itself. They would have seemed the merest routine to Kemble or Mrs. Siddons; but to the Victorian leading ladies they seemed to be unleadingladylike barnstorming. When Kate Rorke played *Candida* I seized the opportunity to pay her a long deferred tribute to her beautiful performance of Helena in "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*", which she had treated as a piece of music from beginning to end. To my amazement she changed color, and reproached me for making heartless fun of her only failure. When I convinced her that I was in earnest she told me how her musical rendering of that most musical part had brought on her such a torrent of critical abuse and misunderstanding that she had never ventured to attempt anything of the sort again!

No wonder I often found actors and actresses nervously taking the utmost care to avoid acting, the climax being reached by an actor engaged for the broadly comic part of Burgess in "*Candida*", who, after rehearsing the first act in subdued tones like a funeral mute, solemnly put up his hand as I vengefully approached him, and said: "Mr. Shaw: I know what you are going to say. But you may depend on me. In the intellectual

drama I never clown." And it was some time before I could persuade him that I was in earnest when I exhorted him to clown for all he was worth. I was continually struggling with the conscientious efforts of our players to underdo their parts lest they should be considered stagey. Much as if Titian had worked in black and grey lest he should be considered painty. It took a European war to cure them of wanting to be ladies and gentlemen first and actresses and actors after.

This difficulty was acute when I had to find a heroine for "Man and Superman". Everybody said that she must be ultra-modern. I said that I wanted a young Mrs. Siddons or Ristori, and that an ultra-modern actress would be no use to me whatever in the part. I was in despair of finding what I wanted when one day there walked into my rooms in the Adelphi a gorgeously goodlooking young lady in a green dress and huge picture hat in which any ordinary woman would have looked ridiculous, and in which she looked splendid, with the figure and gait of a Diana. She said: "Ten years ago, when I was a little girl trying to play Lady Macbeth, you told me to go and spend ten years learning my business. I have learnt it: now give me a part." I handed her the book of "Man and Superman" without a moment's hesitation, and said simply, "Here you are." And with that young lady I achieved performances of my plays which will probably never be surpassed. For Lillah McCarthy was saturated with declamatory poetry and rhetoric from her cradle, and had learnt her business out of London by doing work in which you were either heroic or nothing. She was beautiful, plastic, statuesque, most handsomely made, and seemed to have come straight from the Italian or eighteenth century stage without a trace of the stuffiness of the London cup-and-saucer theatres.

It is an actress's profession to be extraordinary; but Lillah was extraordinary even among actresses. The first natural qualification of an actress who is not a mere puppet, impotent without a producer, is imagination. Lillah had a great deal too much of it: she was of imagination all compact. It was difficult to get her feet down to the ground, and almost impossible to

keep them there. Her life was rich in wonderful experiences that had never happened, and in friendships with wonderful people (including myself) who never existed. All her geese were swans, flying about in an enchanted world. When, as inevitably occurred from time to time, real life and hard objectivity brought her down with a stunning collision, she could be tragically disappointed or murderously enraged; but she could not be disillusioned: the picture changed; but it remained a picture. On the stage she gave superb performances with a force and sureness of stroke and a regal authority that made her front rank position unassailable; but if by chance her imagination started a fresh hare before she went on the stage she would forget all about the play and her part in it, and, whilst mechanically uttering its words and moving through its business, revel in the feelings of some quite different character. The effect of seeing an actress going through the part of, say, Lady Macbeth, under the impression that she is giving a touching representation of Little Nell is curious: at the Court Theatre we described it by the occasional dismal announcement that Lillah was blithering. In this way she was sometimes disqualified by an excess of qualification, like Shelley, who could not write a big poem without smothering it under a whole universe of winds and clouds, mountains and fountains, glories and promontories (with the accent on the Tories) until its theme was lost like a roseleaf in a splendid sunset. The one fault that authors and producers had to find with her was that she would not "stay put". And her friends complained, not without reason, of the startling discrepancies between her daily visions and transfigurations and the much less lovely facts of the case. You could not say that she had the faults of her qualities. Her faults *were* her qualities.

However, her technique fell in with mine as if they had been made for one another, as indeed they had. She created the first generation of Shavian heroines with dazzling success. Not merely playgoing London came to see her: indeed I doubt if playgoing London ever did to any great extent. Political London, artistic London, religious London, and even sporting

London made the long series of performances in which she figured a centre of almost every vein of fashion except the hopeless old theatrical fashion. And she did this by playing my heroines exactly as she would have played Belvidera in "Venice Preserved" if anyone had thought of reviving that or any other of Mrs. Siddons's great parts for her.

During the career of Mrs. Siddons a play was regarded as an exhibition of the art of acting. Playwrights wrote declamatory parts for actors as composers did for singers or violinists, to display their technical virtuosity. This became an abuse: Wagner was quite justified in his complaint that singers thought only of how they sang, and never of what they were singing. Actors who had learnt how "to bring down the house" with a tirade were quite as pleased when the tirade was trash as when it was one of Shakespear's best. The cup-and-saucer drama, and the actor who, having no force to reserve, made a virtue of reserved force, were inevitable reactions against the resultant staginess, staginess being definable as much ado about nothing. The art of acting rhetorical and poetical drama, vulgarized and ridiculous, very soon became a lost art in the fashionable London theatres. Rhetoric and poetry vanished with it. But when I dragged rhetoric and poetry back its executive technique became again indispensable.

Lillah McCarthy describes in this book how she acquired and inherited from her father a love of verbal music in its loftiest ranges, and a physical necessity for declaiming it, with the inevitable accompanying craving for the beauty and dignity of noble architecture and statuary: a craving which could never be satisfied by dressmakers' and tailors' mannequins adorning "interiors" furnished by the best London establishments. Yet such actress-mannequins constituted the entire theatrical beauty stock in the cup-and-saucer drama. The continual efforts to give some sort of vital energy to these shop-window attractions by sex appeal, becoming less and less furtive until the interiors became bedrooms and the fashionable gowns had to be stripped off, mostly on no pretext whatever, in full view of the audience, seemed to Lillah poor stuff compared to a

sonnet by Milton. When the new school arose she liked not only the matter of it (all the intelligent actresses did that) but its manner and method, in which she is to-day an adept, and in the part of it which consists in the delivery of English verse an unrivalled one. The horrible artificiality of that impudent sham the Victorian womanly woman, a sham manufactured by men for men, and duly provided by the same for the same with a bulbously overclothed "modesty" more lascivious than any frank sensuality, had become more and more irksome to the best of the actresses who had to lend their bodies and souls to it—and by the best of the actresses I mean those who had awakeningly truthful minds as well as engaging personalities. I had so little taste for the Victorian womanly woman that in my first play I made my heroine throttle the parlor maid. The scandal of that outrage shook the London theatre and its Press to their foundations: an easy feat; for their foundations were only an inch deep and very sandy at that; and I was soon shaking more serious impostures, including that of the whole rotten convention as to women's place and worth in human society which had made the Victorian sham possible. But for that I needed the vigorous artificiality of the executive art of the Elizabethan stage to expose and bring back to nature the vapid artificiality of the Victorian play.

Lillah McCarthy's secret was that she combined the executive art of the grand school with a natural impulse to murder the Victorian womanly woman; and this being just what I needed I blessed the day when I found her; and, if I become Dictator (which may happen to anybody nowadays), will most certainly engage and command her, for an enormous salary, to broadcast all the loveliest and splendidest pages of English literature everyday to them that have ears to hear her.

Ayot St. Lawrence,
May 1933.

G.B.S.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

To send this book out into the world without a word of acknowledgment of what it owes to others would be as ungracious as to leave a house-party without thanking host and hostess for their hospitality.

It would be worse than ungracious, downright dishonest: for whereas I only owe most of what I have found good in life to my friends, this book owes its very life to them.

Without their help I should never have been born in print. Without them I could not have learnt to talk alone.

Lady Vaughan, one of my oldest friends, was the first to give me help and encouragement. She undertook to edit the story of my life on the stage which appeared a few years ago in the *Strand Magazine*: and in the preparation of it I received much valuable assistance from two other friends, Miss Kitty Everest and Miss Violet Shepherd.

The experience which I got from this adventure into autobiography was invaluable. It showed me that if I were to succeed in reliving my life in print I must not only dig into the records of my career and into my memory, but that I must try also to find out what sort of person I was and am, and how I had gone on year by year performing the automatic miracle of growing up—changing constantly and yet retaining my identity. I began to see vaguely what I had to do, but found it impossible to set about doing it.

Then came another friend, Hector Bolitho, to whom I owe enlightenment and deep gratitude. He showed me that I must select and re-select from that wealth of material fact which had been assembled those things which I believe to have both some value in themselves and also as links which bind together past and present.

Once I had grasped this idea I realized that no one could

bring it to fruition for me. Others no doubt could paint my portrait far better than I could, but no one except myself could discover the portrait that was to be painted.

Others could show far more graphically than I the externals of my life. They could describe in vivid prose the characteristics of my friends, but no one save myself could reveal in what ways my mind and my character have repaid, or tried to repay, the debt which they owe to those friends. I certainly could never have even tried to do these things had not fortune come to my aid and, for better or for worse, showed me how to set to work.

I discussed the problem with one who in thin disguises appears in the later pages of this book, now as "my controller" and now as "my professor." Here he appears as "my confessor." I asked this man of many aliases how I should set about the task. "It's easy enough," he said. "There was once a great French naturalist named Cuvier. He reconstructed a complete picture of some ancient, long extinct creature from one small bone—all that Nature had left of it.

"You have in your diaries the bones of the past. All you have to do is to make those dry bones live.

"You are better off than Cuvier for, besides the bones of fact, you have all those letters from your wonderful friends. Read them, and you will discover that each one will help you to recall not only their image but your own."

Something in my mind lit up at this suggestion. I began to try to trace out my own lineaments as seen in the many mirrors of the friendships which I have enjoyed. I saw my own life not as something isolated but happily joined with many other lives—as the life of myself and my friends.

And so, no longer fearful, I went to work—as a child is no longer fearful when it steps into the dark, holding a trusted hand and in the company of grown ups.

That hand, the hand of friendship, has brought me to my journey's end. I at least am happy that I took it, for had I not done so I could not have discovered how much I owe to all those who have given me their friendship. Some are no more.

To those: to Thomas Hardy, Robert Bridges, John Galsworthy, Arnold Bennett, Charles Ricketts, Lord Melchett and Lord Oxford I can, alas, only pay the tribute of my devotion to their cherished memories. To the others: Lady Oxford, Sir James Barrie, H. G. Wells, William Poel, John Masefield and Bernard Shaw I can, and do, offer my most grateful thanks for permitting me to publish their letters and thanks yet more grateful for allowing me to number myself among their friends.

Sir James Barrie, whom I begged to look through the proofs of this book, met me, when I next saw him, with a charming smile by which I knew that my temerity in writing about my friends had not met with his disapproval. As I looked at him the smile, whilst remaining kind, became a little quizzical and yet more so as he said, “. . . But you've been very cheeky.” I had to be. How else could shyness such as mine fortify itself for the ordeal of trying to tell the truth: all of it about myself and a little of it about him and all those other friends of mine!

LILLAH MCCARTHY.

MYSELF AND MY FRIENDS

CHAPTER I

“HEAR MY VOICE, YE CARELESS DAUGHTERS !”

I

I WAS born an actress. I search my memory and can find no time when I did not look upon the world as a stage and myself as merely a player. Perhaps the lure of the drama was in my blood or perhaps I got it with the air I breathed. My love of acting may have come from some un-English strain in me: from the Irish of my father or from the Welsh with which his mother dowered me—or perchance from the more distant Spanish strain which family tradition bestows on me. I prefer to think that it was the English part of me that made me an actress. For the English in me came out of Herefordshire; the county which begot the famous family of Kemble; the county which only chance robbed of cradling her own child—the greatest of the Kemble line and greatest of English actresses—Sarah Siddons.

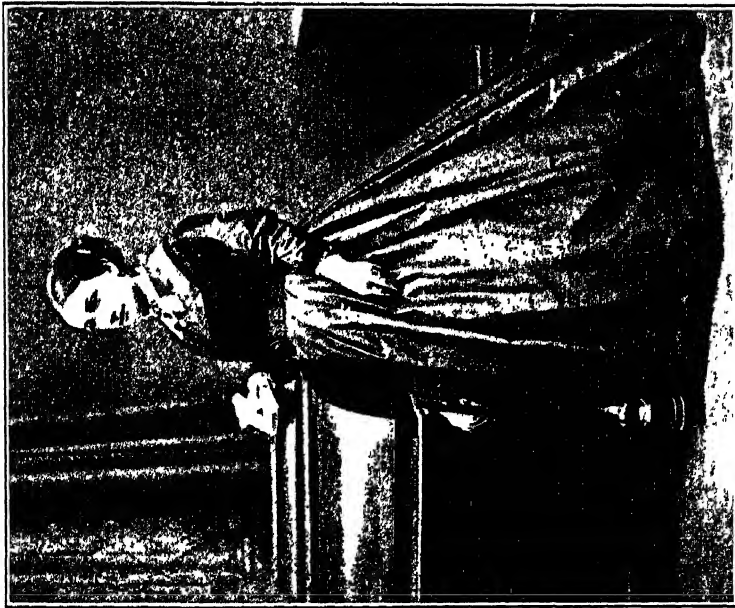
As far back as I can remember I saw the stage beckoning me.

Now, after many years spent in the theatre, after realising with Leonardo da Vinci that those who desire lasting fame should “shun those studies in which the work that results dies with the worker”—and how quickly the work of an actor dies—if I had to choose my career again, I should become an actress again. This realization that I was but wax in the potter’s hand gives

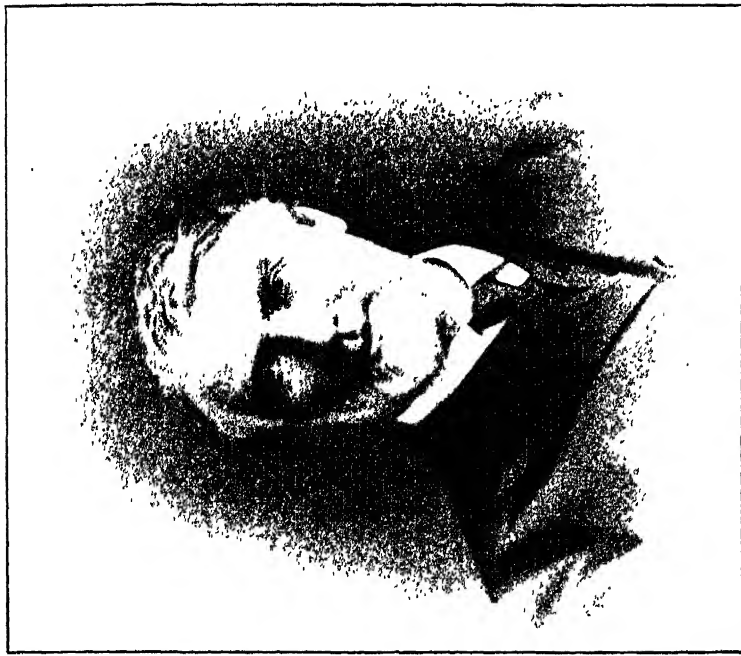
me a wistful and tender sympathy with the strange intent little girl who memory tells me was Lilla McCarthy. Even in her childhood her family seemed to know that she "was going on the stage."

A comic little figure—little Lilla! I see her hurrying up the hills around Cheltenham where she was born and where her childhood was spent; a knapsack on her back, she trots along to find a quiet place where she may learn her lines from "Paradise Lost." She must learn them to please her father and earn the shilling he has promised her. Other girls—so one of them (Mary Smith) who afterwards became a dear friend has told me—used to say as she went by: "There goes Lilla McCarthy, shaking out her curls. She's proud." Poor little girl with a strange unchildlike eager happiness. She was not proud, only preoccupied; for her father had given her those lines to learn and she must know and say them by supper time!

The impressions made on me by these childhood days in Cheltenham are as vivid now as they were when they first printed themselves upon my memory. The well-planned town, with its leisured gentlefolk and the glorious hills which shut Cheltenham off from the noisy outside world, I see it now, as I saw it then, as a perfect setting for a life of well-bred retirement; a place where people grown old in the service of their country find peace and modest comfort. I see the retired majors going to the club. I hear the snore of their afternoon siestas. The horses in the carriages still prance before my eyes. They are drawing old ladies up and down the Promenade, their high steps keeping time with the music of Sullivan, played daily by the town band. The Yeomanry clattering down the street as they come in from their annual training still win my heart; lovely men on still more lovely horses. How peaceful it is: an oasis of leisured and ordered life, of planted trees, gardens and pleasant walks. Cheltenham, the heart of England! pulsing so gently that life there seems like a tableau rather than a pageant, not moving but enduring.



MRS EMMA MCCARTHY
(NEE PRICE)
Mother of Lillah McCarthy



Photograph by W. and D. Downey.
J. MCCARTHY, F.R.S.
Father of Lillah McCarthy

All this I see; but then swiftly gusts of memory come and sweep away all these peaceful scenes. Like a rushing mighty wind my father comes into my life; bursting in upon it as he had burst in on Cheltenham and capturing once for all the heart of his little girl, the seventh of his children and the child of his choice. A handsome, tall, masterful, wild and eccentric Irishman, with as good blood and as irresponsible a character as County Cork could give him, my father was a tornado of a man. He caught me up and carried me far on the wings of his wild enthusiasms. During all the years of my childhood and until he died he dominated my life. His love for me and mine for him made me oblivious of all else.

The figure of my mother, with her lovely face as of a cameo in ivory, seems to have all but vanished from my memories of these strange and strenuous years. My father was poetry; she seemed only prose.

The cares of all that numerous household which, patriarch-wise, my father gathered about him, were hers; husband, her mother, eight children—for one came after me—an aunt or so and vague distant relatives, all looked to her for daily bread, whilst she looked somewhat vainly to him for the wherewithal to supply it. Like many a man, my father abounded in hospitality, but left his wife to contrive it. It was for her, unaided save by heaven, to work daily the miracle of feeding our little multitude. No wonder my mother was prose to me. Distracted to make ends meet, she would send me out to do the shopping. I was to go to the greengrocer and pick out the very best cabbages, and I must smile my very best smile because they must not cost more than twopence each. So after all I owe my first exercise in dramatic art to my mother.

Though my memory of her in those days is blurred, my mother in her later years stands out serene and beautiful, and helps me to understand how so delicate a frame could have borne eight children and borne with her incalculable husband. In her ripe old age my mother became yet more beautiful than when she was a

"belle" in Cheltenham. Life was able to wring but one complaint from her. It was uttered when her eighth child was born. She said: "Thus far and no farther," nor could her husband, for all his masterful ways, shake her resolution. Eight is enough, she said, and there the matter and the children ended.

When in her later days she came to live with me in my flat in Adelphi Terrace she would sit in the window and dream of her eight children; or she would put little slips of plants which people gave her in the window boxes, and as surely as she planted them they would grow. I see her bonneted and clothed in black, with a white shawl over her shoulders, leaning on the policeman's arm—he knew her well—as he leads her across the Strand; the traffic stopped whilst her slow step takes her over the road; then, safe on the other side, she would smile up at the tall policeman and he would draw himself up and salute as though she were a queen.

She made matter-of-factness a fine art. I come back from the theatre and find a little note: "Lilla, dear, be a good girl"—I was over thirty but still a child to her—"eat your milk pudding and drink your cocoa, and go straight to bed. I told those boys"—those boys being perhaps Augustus John, his friend Alvaro Guivara, or other cheery roysterer who liked to come in and sing gipsy songs after I returned from the theatre—"I told those boys that I would not let you stop up late."

In my childhood, Cheltenham days, however, I knew only one parent, my father. He would take me tramping with him over the hills, swinging along in his loose-fitting clothes, till I had to run my fastest to keep up with him. Then when he reached the hill-top he would stop and begin to speak. In a voice that sounded as if it came from heaven—so sweet and clear it was—he would speak poetry and I would listen with no thought of what he said, but entranced by the music of the voice:

"I am not a God afar off, I am a brother and a friend;
Within your bosoms I reside, and you reside in me;

Lo! we are One, forgiving all Evil, not seeking recompense.

. . . . My mountains are my own, and I will keep them to myself:

The Malvern and the Cheviot, the Wolds, Plinlimmon, and Snowdon

Are mine. Here will I build my Laws of Moral Virtue."

The rest of the family thought us queer, and queer we undoubtedly were; though at the time everything my father did seemed natural to me. The idea that I was different from the other children was perhaps fostered in their minds—for Irish minds are not impervious to superstition—by a strange mischance which befell me when I was a few months old. It was in the summer time. My cradle was in my sister's room. I lay asleep. A thunderstorm broke over Cheltenham. I woke. I screamed. My sister gave me my bottle to comfort me. The milk wassour. I had convulsions. The doctor came. I was rigid and cold. He pronounced me dead. My coffin was ordered. Then my grandmother, whom later on I remember as always sitting silent and nodding over the fire enswathed in the folds of a vast shawl, came suddenly to life. I had not been baptised. She rose up, sent for a clergyman, who baptised me in the name of Lilla. She carried me into her room, laid me on her bed and sat and watched beside me all through the night. She had told them that I would live; that she could see colour in my cheeks. In the early morning as she bent over me my eyes opened and I smiled. She caught me up in her arms and carried me to my mother. "Take her," she said; "she has come back to life"; and then my grandmother returned to the fireside, and so far as I can remember never afterwards took notice of the child she saved.

My school days were disastrous. I could not learn in the way my mistresses wished to teach me. It was nobody's fault: neither theirs nor mine. I cannot even

now learn as others learn, and therefore my mind possesses no orderly and copious store of approved knowledge.

I should never have dared even to try to write this story of my life had I not read in the wonderful book from which I have already quoted—Leonardo da Vinci's Note-book—lines which seemed to make me do it:

"I am fully aware that the fact of my not being a man of letters may cause certain arrogant persons to think that they may with reason censure me, alleging that I am a man ignorant of book learning. Foolish folk! Do they not know that I might retort by saying, as did *Marius* to the Roman patricians: 'They who themselves go about adorned in the labour of others will not permit me my own.' They will say that, because of my lack of book-learning, I cannot properly express what I desire to treat of! Do they not know that my subjects require for their exposition Experience rather than Words of Others? And since Experience has been the Mistress of whoever has written well, I take her as my mistress, and to her in all points make my appeal."

These words told me: "Never mind the lack of book-learning! You have learned from experience. Perhaps what you can say may be of use to others; so say it!"

I was five years old, and must go to a kindergarten. My father took me and left me with the mistress. She wore musty black clothes and ringlets. Tall and gaunt, she terrified me. I was set to do a task of needlework. I've no doubt it was a sampler, for I never see a sampler now without feeling the tears that went to the making of it. Even to this day, though I can design a dress with anyone, I would rather go in old clothes than sew new ones. I suppose my distaste for the needle was created by my father. At all events, it was fostered by him. "Stop that rag-stabbing," he would say, "and come out on the hills"; and off we would go.

I began to nod over the sampler until, my head

getting lower and lower, I fell fast asleep. Suddenly I was awakened by the mistress's thimble tapping, tapping relentlessly upon my head, and as I woke I saw that tall, gaunt figure towering over me and glaring into my eyes. Then for the first time I knew terror: something unescapable and yet to be fled from. I fled—out of the house, out of the town, up to the hill and along a lonely lane called "Jacob's Ladder." I flung myself down on the ground, but could still feel the relentless thimble tapping, tapping on my head. I did not know what it meant, but I wanted to die; I wanted to be like the birds with no lessons to learn except flying and eating. Then suddenly the artist in me—with my stomach aiding—brought me to my senses. I remembered that birds have only insects and worms to eat and knew that I wanted my tea. Never did Shakespeare say truer word than that which he puts into the mouth of Cleopatra: "I am quickly ill and well." The emotions of people of artistic temperament are of an intensity which others can neither experience nor imagine; but it is mercifully ordained that they are sooner assuaged than are the emotions of less impressionable folk.

It is said that a great French actress—reproved for wearing bright colours the day after her lover's funeral—replied: "Ah, you should have seen me yesterday; then you would have known what true sorrow is!"

The family decided, after the thimble episode, that I was too young for school, and they waited until I was eight before sending me back. This time a high school: The Priory. But I had no luck. All went well until the end of the term, when the parents came to hear their children recite. Our class was to do scenes from Hans Andersen's "Snow Queen." Each of us was to read an allotted number of lines. My turn. I began to read and, absorbed in the story, went on reading far beyond my allowance. Nobody interrupted, and when I came to the end I was applauded. I wasn't used to that. My brothers never applauded when I read poetry to them, and so when the head mistress was called I feared the thimble,

and neither encouragement nor threats could loose my tongue or moisten my parched throat. The cane was brought and the "little bird that can sing and won't sing must be made to sing" . . . by being made to cry! I did cry, and then as soon as I got a chance I ran away. This time I remembered that my father had said never a word of reproach—Oh, the gentleness of sometimes violent men!—at my previous escapade, and so I ran straight home to him and threw myself sobbing in his arms. He had heard already, yet all he did was to hold me close and comfort me. He understood me like no one else in the world. No wonder that I came to worship him. He dried my eyes and said: "No more school for you, my girl. I will teach you myself." He did; and never was such a teacher nor such a curriculum. My first lesson was to read the second book of "Paradise Lost"; but with him to teach it was Paradise Regained.

II

My father fills all the canvas of my memory of the next three years of my life. I see him standing before a black-board, sketching Chippendale chair legs, Jacobean chair backs, Roman vases. He is teaching me the rudiments of art. He takes me to museums to make me learn to see the difference between things. Why one who was both an artist and a scholar should have so ignored the foundations of knowledge is beyond me to explain; I suppose he was artist first and scholar afterwards. He would teach us astronomy, of which he knew enough to become a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society; but we must be able to turn the telescope on the planets visible in the heaven before we knew how to use the instrument. But what care I for these shortcomings; he infected me with his enthusiasm and his love of beauty both in Art and Nature.

When I was younger I used to think that these omissions in my education were disastrous, but as I grow older I find that they are only inconvenient; for I have dis-

covered that the misfortune of not knowing what other people have thought has some compensation in obliging you to think for yourself.

Needless to say the diversity of my father's interests, which ranged from furniture and astronomy to poetry and real estate, did not prove compatible with worldly success. Like the men of Athens—and he was Athenian in his tastes—he was for ever seeking some new thing. He liked to sell a house and buy a new one. He would sell the house we lived in "for immediate possession," and then must rush around to find another hive in which to house us. It was a life of muddle and mortgages; but in every new house there was the Greek alphabet hung up on the walls for the instruction of our young minds. Books we had in plenty, but they were the books he chose. No novels!—"All trash"; but of an evening he would read to us Milton, Bunyan, Shakespeare and Blake. It may seem absurd, but it was not. He used to say: "These are the best books ever written in our language, only dullards find them dull"; and I at least can say, without reproaching myself with priggishness, that I am for ever grateful to my father for imposing his will on ours. It's all wrong, no doubt, from present standards. It ought to be the other way about; but I am glad to have had a father who both ruled and loved me. Yet I am forced to confess that his strenuous ways left but little room for fun and humour in our lives. My father was not prone to laughter; and so, although I love it, I only found it out in later years.

As I stood—a passionate, intense figure—on the hills of Cheltenham, stretching out my hand towards Art, it was the Tragic Muse that deigned to take it. Comedy, as she told me later, hiding from my father's stern face, nevertheless smiled behind her mask, biding her time.

CHAPTER II

THE THEATRE—EARLY DOORS

I

I AM now in my teens; my emotions all aquiver and my mind all of a jumble. My father still holds my adoration; but I am beginning to have a life of my own. I go to see the cricket at Cheltenham School. Gilbert Jessop becomes my hero; there is nothing restrained about him, hitting "sixes" all over the field. I become a bowler: fast overhand. I should like to bowl him out. But later my idol failed me, as is the way of idols. It was in Australia. England versus Australia. All Australia was there. I was with Australian friends. The game was going against us. "Wait," I told them; "wait until Jessop comes in." He came in, faced the bowler, gave a mighty slash at the ball. Missed! Clean bowled! My friends cheered, but I furtively wiped away a tear.

The painful warrior famoused for fight,
After a thousand victories once foiled,
Is from the books of honour razèd quite
And all the rest forgot for which he toiled!

I begin, now that I am in my teens, to take an interest in dress; a serious interest, of course.

I dress according to the part which I feel that I am playing. To-day is a dull day; I, a much misunderstood girl whom nobody loves but her father. My heart is heavy; my thoughts ambitious and noble; clothes to match; a three-cornered hat, Napoleonic—wondrous collars—turndown, Byronic, and square-toed shoes to indicate the simplicity of the soul.

I feel lonely: a Cinderella, for are not all my older sisters going to the hunt ball wearing dreamy dresses

made of tulle and wreaths of forget-me-not, whilst I must stay at home. They say I am too young. As if they knew!

Then all of a sudden something happens, something which reveals forces in me—dark forces and terrible which are stronger than myself.

There was a blue sash—a Joshua Reynolds blue—which a sister wore. It was a heavenly blue to me. I used to count the days when it would be mine; for clothes descended like heirlooms in our family. Outgrown by the elders, they passed all down the line of children. At last the blue sash became mine. I tied it in a great bow about my cotton dress, and went queening it along the Promenade in Cheltenham. When I got home again I wrapped the sash in tissue paper, beautifully folded, and laid it lovingly in the bottom of a drawer. We had a maid—one Lucy. I did not like her much; pert and pretty, with flaming russet hair. Sunday was her day out. In the evening my brother Dan said: "I saw our Lucy walking along the street. She was wearing your blue sash." I said not a word. I went to the drawer. There was the crumpled tissue paper. The sash was gone!

My mind became a blank. Drawn by a will that was not mine, I was sent by it down the stairs; quite quietly. I had to pick up the knife that lay on the kitchen table and must wait; wait for Lucy till she came in by the back door and then. . . .

Thank Heaven! my brother found me, and, terrified at my appearance, called my father. He came and, with a comprehension that will ever appear to me inspired, he put his arms about me and drew me to him. At his touch I began to sob, the knife dropped from my hand and I stared with horror at it as it lay on the ground. Though never another word was said—he forbade all mention of it—I was haunted for years by the vision of myself, knife in hand, in the dark behind the door.

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Again, years after, when I had become an actress, a similar irresistible emotion overwhelmed me. It was in 1895. I was rehearsing Juliet with Ben Greet. As the

play drew to a close the tragedy so overwhelmed me that I must die. There was no acting then. The dagger drove into my breast; Romeo and I alike were smeared with blood. Ben Greet, livid with anger, shouted at me; but I was too dazed to hear. Even these warnings did not teach me the lesson which I had to learn from them. Not till I played in Masefield's "Nan" and was the victim once again of the same intensity of emotion, did it become at last clear to me that I had the most difficult part of acting yet to learn.

There in the last act of "Nan" I stand, with the sound of the tide coming up the Severn "out of the wells of the sea" ready to plunge the knife into Dick's body and drown myself in the tide. I would stand in the wings when the scene was over, trembling and shuddering at the sinister force which drove me to plunge the knife into the body of that poor, spongy, greedy lover of mine.

There in the wings of the stage I learned to understand that passions so intense as these are the raw materials out of which the actress must weave her art. She must not seek either to avoid or allay them—fearful though they be; she must learn to use them for what they are: the terrible instrument of tragic drama. Yet how hard is the task! I learned it very slowly, and even when, many years later, I played "The Witch," there were still some who were apt to find my tragic moments too much for their nerves. J. D. Beveridge, when playing with me in "The Witch," threw up the part because, he said, in the scene in which I had to wish him dead he felt that he had to die when I looked right into his eyes. He was disinclined, he said, to sacrifice his life to my art! Claude King took his place and, sturdy and stout-hearted as he was, used to say: "You need not look at me like that when you wish me dead. It's so uncomfortable for all of us."

I have heard some artists say that art is an affair of the emotions only, and the less the intelligence has to do with it the better. If, as the ancients held, the liver is the seat of the emotions, those who talk like that must have

very torpid livers; their hepatic circulation must be very slow. For, as these youthful and grim experiences of mine showed me, uncontrolled emotion, though it may make a tragedy in common life, turns to farce upon the stage. The carving knife for Lucy, Juliet's death, the Witch's sorcery, all taught me that art—dramatic art, at all events—must use both the emotions and the intelligence for its portrayal: intelligence to keep the emotions within bounds, and the emotions to mellow the intelligence.

But the little Cheltenham girl had a long and hard road to follow before experience taught her even this little bit of wisdom.

II

My father, consistent in his contradictoriness, disliked actors, but delighted in the stage. He urged upon his fellow townsmen the building of a new theatre in Cheltenham. He got it built, and Lily Langtry came to open it with a performance of "Lady Clancarty." I was there, long before the time. I sat straining my eyes towards the closed red curtains. I felt that the theatre was mine, for had I not stood yesterday upon a chair reciting poetry in order that my father might test the acoustics of the theatre. Presently the red curtains parted, Lily Langtry appeared. I saw her loveliness, of which everyone had told me, and, seeing her, something that I had never thought of before came and remained in my mind. There are two kinds of beauty: beauty of face and eyes and hair and body, and beauty of movement. She taught me, because she had both.

Now I am fifteen and make my first appearance on the stage. No minor part for Lilla. She is Lady Macbeth. I take down my book of Press cuttings, turn back to the earliest one—faded, yellow. I read it and smile, and yet the praise which it showers on me is still the sweetest I have ever known. How I am tempted to write it all down, for I want so much this little girl who used

to be me to be admired and loved. But no, I cannot. I shall keep it for a delicious secret to be shared by her who stands at the beginning of her career with me who am saying good-bye to mine: she is to me—childless—my child; my only child.


From time to time the peaceful streets of Cheltenham were invaded by actors and actresses from the outside world. Sometimes Frank Benson (Sir Frank) would bring his company. Cheltenham welcomed him, for was he not a gentleman as well as an actor!

Miss Beale, head mistress of the Cheltenham College for Ladies, approved of Benson. He must present Shakespeare's plays for the edification of the young ladies; but for decorum's sake the company must play, not in costume, but in morning dress. Shakespeare sleeping in the neighbouring county turned in his grave and smiled and said: "Why not? We used to do it."

He and Frank Benson emerged triumphantly from the ordeal, and Benson, in spite of his conventional dress, won all our hearts completely.

My father took me to see him, and when Sir Frank and I met last year at Stratford, at the opening of the new theatre, I reminded him of the day on which he listened to my recital of Prince Arthur from "King John" and of his saying: "She has talent. Send her to London to be trained."

And so it came about that the last of our Cheltenham residences was put up for sale "for immediate possession," and some time in 1893 we all packed off to London.



CHAPTER III

AT THE STAGE DOOR

I

BY this time brother Dan was something of a scholar. In fact, all my brothers and sisters were scholarly. My sister, Marion Ada, a lovely girl, used to pucker her brow as she read all sorts of subjects for London University examinations. Yet even she could not resist the attraction of the stage. She became an actress too, and in later years did splendid work in London, teaching voice-production and elocution. The Church and the House of Commons owe something to her; for she taught many public men—and women also—how to use their voices properly.

Brother Dan, more learned still, threw up his books and came along to London with me on his arm, bombarding the stage doors. How proud I was of his company! He was so good-looking. But as yet there were no stage doors to open to me.

I went to Hermann Vezin's School of Acting. Vezin began by making me repeat each letter of the alphabet until I was able to set them all slipping off my tongue or through my teeth with amazing rapidity. This way of learning vexed me. I wanted to play Lady Macbeth; not learn the alphabet of acting.

I told him so; but his only reply was to make me begin the alphabet all over again.

II

I went from Hermann Vezin's kindergarten straight to heaven. Brother Dan took me. He made me go with him to the Shakespeare Reading Society, and when

I got there I knew it was heaven because I saw William Shakespeare. There he was with his handsome, gentle face with resolution glancing from behind a gracious smile. Dan nudged me and said, "Don't stare: that's William Poel, the Dramatic Director." "No!" I whispered, "it's Shakespeare!" I was right, for the more I came to know William Poel the more clearly I saw in him Shakespeare come to life again, and that being so it seemed simple and natural that Poel should give new life to Shakespeare's dramas: that he should do easily what others had so often found impossible: reconcile the poetic and the dramatic in Shakespeare's plays by showing that they are not contradictory but complementary to one another.

The Shakespeare in Poel made it easy for him to keep the exquisite rhythm and cadence of the verse even whilst the drama is hurtling along its swift tempestuous course.

To you, William Poel, pioneer of modern Shakespeare production, I owe more than to all the many others who have taught me; for you were the first to make me see the essential of drama—harmonious movement. Others after you, and it may be independently, have discovered and applied it; but you are the pioneer. Before you, Shakespeare lived everywhere except on the stage. You, by opening the stage doors once again to him, brought Shakespeare at last to his natural home in the hearts of all those who love poetry and drama.

III

Anxious mothers sometimes come to me and tell me, with tearful voice, that their children want to become actors.

"I don't want him to go on the stage and become a drifting actor," says one. "Is he a drifter?" I ask. "No," indignantly replies the anxious mother. "Then let him go on the stage. He will never learn drifting there."

I believe in the discipline of the theatre. The regular hours for rehearsal, the conserving of strength for work,

the bodily training necessary for physical fitness: all these things impose discipline upon the actor. No other art makes such demands upon self-control; and I believe that no other art develops character so well, at all events in a woman.

I know actresses who have practised Spartan-like discipline all through their lives. Marie Tempest has made herself rest from half-past four until six o'clock every day of her life since she was twenty-five. On *matinée* days, she is whisked off to bed between the two performances. Nothing diverts her from her rule. That is why she is still so radiant that her fellow-players often seem ordinary when she appears upon the stage. When Irene Vanbrugh was playing Somerset Maugham's "Grace," the demands upon her strength were so great that, for some time, the doctor kept her in bed all the twenty hours of the day when she was not playing. I am certain that no profession or trade demands so much from a human being as does a Repertory Company on tour. I have no patience with the talk about the self-indulgent actor. He is rare, and he is almost invariably a poor actor.

I go often to the circus in order to enjoy the sight of discipline in action. These feats of skill are not done by flabby self-indulgent men and women. Observe the carriage of the artists of the circus. It has a style about it: a grace which some may think a pose. It is not. They have the carriage of true aristocrats; of men whose eyes are alert and whose bodies are under control. Loose living and slack ways are unknown among the true artists of the circus.

When I go among them, without a word said they accept me as one of them. I stroke the horses and they let me dance the children in my arms, for camaraderie among artists is instinctive.

The swagger of the actor fallen on evil days: who has not seen it and, alas! may not see it any day near Strand stage doors and public bars? People laugh as they hear the throaty voice telling how "he said one day to

Irving . . . ,” but I cannot laugh, for I see in that swaggering gait and hear in those throaty accents the remains of that same style which actors use—the style which gives grace and dignity to men.

The work I did in 1913 will show the kind of life an actress leads. I began a season of repertory at the Savoy Theatre with “The Doctor’s Dilemma.” Next evening we revived “The Death of Tintagile,” and this was followed by “The Silver Box.” For the Wednesday matinée we played “The Doctor’s Dilemma” again, and in the evening I played “Nan.” On Thursday we played “The Wild Duck” for the matinée and on Thursday and Friday evening we repeated “The Doctor’s Dilemma.” On Saturday afternoon we played “The Witch” and on Saturday evening “The Doctor’s Dilemma.” While doing this, the company was also rehearsing every day for “A Midsummer Night’s Dream.” In addition, I had to share responsibility for management of two theatres, The Kingsway and The Savoy, and must superintend the costumes, learn my parts and attend the rehearsals.

The satisfaction which comes out of labour so hard as this lies, I think, mainly in the feeling of working at high pressure, of using every ounce of physical and intellectual strength, and yet caring for one’s body enough to realise that its health is one of the essential assets of an actress. Applause is a precious condiment; but love of work is the daily fare which alone can sustain an actress.

IV

The discipline of William Poel’s rehearsals sometimes wore me down. But I emerged from it knowing something.

Poel scorned convention and tradition.

He gave a brilliant example of his contempt for custom and of his genius when, in the “sleep-walking scene,” he made me, Lady Macbeth, as the scene opens

sit at my dressing-table and begin to take off my rings and loosen my hair.

The actress, who must presently reach such a dreadful climax of despair, can only rise to it if she begins on the lowest note in the scale of emotions. The tension of apprehension which the silence evokes will moreover have pity blended with it; pity for the poor distraught woman doing with hesitating fingers these trivial things of her daily life.

I was beginning to make headway, when all of a sudden something happened which made me feel as though I had shot right up to heaven. After days and days of scolding from William Poel and copious tears from me, it was arranged that I should read "Romeo" at the Steinway Hall. "Romeo" himself was there—Henry Irving. What would he think of such a little rival? After I had read the part he came and took my hand, bent over it, and in that voice which none who has heard it can forget began to praise me. I was hot with blushes and happy as a queen. There is only one other man who can bestow praise as sweetly as Irving could: Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson, great actor and generous beyond belief. What a debt of gratitude I owe you! for was not your beautiful voice the first to say to me when you heard me speak Shakespeare's sonnets, "You must say these sonnets and go on saying them till everyone in England has heard them and knows them by heart."

But lest Irving's or anybody else's praise should make me proud, I had my father to tell me to go and learn how to do better, and brother Dan to remind me of the emptiness of compliments and the sinfulness of pride.

Nor was brother Dan the only one. I had five brothers, all the dearest that a girl could have, but none the less prepared to deal faithfully with "lofty Lilla," as they used to call me when I held my head too high.

On any free days that I had my father would take me out to see the sights of London, or I would go with him to sales at Christie's or Sotheby's. He would find

bargains; bargains which contributed to keep us on the verge of poverty.

He loved to haunt the Charing Cross Road book-shops, looking out for old editions. We would go to picture galleries or explore London for its statues. I was with him when he first saw the statue of Charles I in Trafalgar Square. "That's beautiful," he said; "the finest I have seen in London." I learnt afterwards that most people think so; but that only increased my admiration for my father. When I was busy with my work he would go out alone, always returning with some book or other as a present for me. They would be books about the theatre or of the lives of actresses. Once—a great day for me—he brought me a life of Sarah Siddons, and led by the romance of her story, I made a journey to Paddington Green to find the meagre stone which marked her grave. The visit had a happy sequel for me. A week or two after I had made it, the Town Clerk of Paddington, the father of my friend Olivia Detheridge, came and told us of the plan which was on foot. There was to be a memorial to Sarah Siddons less unworthy of her greatness. The Shakespeare Society would give a performance of "Macbeth" at St. George's Hall. Mr. E. Glossop Such would be Macbeth. Would I play Lady Macbeth? My earliest wish was fulfilled; I would. It was on this occasion that I added "h" to my name; "Lillah" looked more imposing.

Among those who came to see "Macbeth" was George Moore. He must have liked my acting, for next day I received an invitation to his house to tea. He wanted to see me about a play of his. My father was alarmed. The danger which he had always feared had come at last: his daughter invited to tea with a playwright and in his own house. He would save his child. I might go, I might talk to George Moore; but my father would wait on the other side of the road; I must see and talk to this playwright at the door, and not go one step inside the house. The tragi-comedy of the scene still haunts me.

Yesterday, Lady Macbeth: to-day, innocent maiden,

holding her father's hand, led to the house of George Moore. He leaves me with a parting admonition; vanishes into the shadows; but his eye is still upon me. I knock and ring as requested. The butler—it must have been a butler—opens the door. "Come in," he says, "Mr. Moore is expecting you." "I may not," I reply. "Mr. Moore must come out and talk to me." "But Mr. Moore has company and cannot come out," the butler says. "I may not come in; my father has forbidden. . . ." George Moore comes, followed by his guests—they overhear me. He laughs. They all laugh. "Quite right, my dear; don't you come in," says one of them. "Nobody's safe from him." I fly, lest they should see my tears. My father emerges from the shadows. "Good girl," he says. But I feel anything but good.

Many years afterwards George Moore smiled upon me again; but the memory remains a tragi-comedy.

For yet another reason the performance of *Lady Macbeth* is ever memorable to me. Half-way through, the producer came with exciting news. A well-known critic, one who had written a play, and had had it acted, was in the front row. He was from the *Saturday Review*. "He has got red hair, a red beard and a white face." Brother Dan patted me on the shoulder and told me not to be afraid. "He won't eat you," he said. "He's a vegetarian." I went on to the stage and saw nothing but two eyes staring out of a white face surrounded by a halo of red hair: Mr. Bernard Shaw.

This was about the time when those twin volcanoes—Shaw and Frank Harris—were in weekly eruption. Shaw had been critic on *The World*—and has he not kept that job all his life! He had already put Shakespeare in his place by knocking him off his pedestal. He boasted—and with justice—"I have made Shakespeare popular by knocking him off his pedestal and kicking him around the place and making people realise that he is not a demi-god but a dramatist."

Of course, in those days I knew nothing of the significance of Shakespeare in relation to national life nor

any of the high matters of that sort which Shaw and Harris knew all about. The chief significance that Shakespeare had in my life was to provide me with parts which I could act as often as I got the chance. I was a realist; as the very young always are. Nevertheless, in an unconscious sort of way I shared Shaw's views. Shakespeare's plays were, and are, first and last plays to me. When I read them I smell the theatre, all frowzy and delicious.

When they told me that Shaw was in front "to see 'Macbeth,'" all I cared for was to show Shaw how Lillah could act Shakespeare. I would freeze him with horror. I would melt him with pity. He was Irish—I would cast a spell over him. But alas! I was never good at spelling. It failed to work. The Saturday eruption was as punctual and as petrifying as usual. It petrified me; left me a Pompeian figure; actress reclining, overtaken by Vesuvius; preserved in lava.

I had walked badly, I had spoken badly. My movements were all wrong. Everything that I had done was wrong. . . .

I dropped the paper. In my rage I burnt it. I saw myself as a much-wronged woman. I was beginning to think what I should wear for the part, when brother Dan—for once excited—waving the *Saturday Review*, burst in. "Well, that's a splendid notice you've got," said brother Dan. "From Bernard Shaw, too." I could have set my Ten Commandments in his face, so outraged was I. "Yes," he said, "our Lillah 'born to act,' beautiful and 'rich'!" I snatched the paper. Yes, there it was: "born to act . . . has great natural ability. . . ." I read on, gulping down the praises. But at the end it said that I "ought to go into the country for ten years and learn my business." Dan stood there grinning. "He is a dear," I said. "Shall you go?" said Dan. "Go? I would go to the end of the world for him." "Quickly ill, quickly well," said Dan.

Wonder succeeded wonder in those days. It was not very long after the performance of "Macbeth" that

William Poel took me to Swinburne, to whom I was to read the part of Gwendoline in his play, "Locrine." It is, by the way, the longest woman's part ever written. We went to The Pines at Putney Hill, where Swinburne was living with his friend Watts Dunton. The house was smug and mid-Victorian. William Poel had warned me that I was not to be afraid—that Mr. Swinburne was "of a highly excitable and nervous disposition." When we came into the room—oh! the Victorian mustiness of it—Swinburne stood up and was very charming. He was dressed in shiny black from head to foot. His frock-coat fitted badly, his trousers were pulled up so high that they showed the tops of his elastic-sided boots. His arms hung so limp at his sides that they might have been boneless; but his head was astonishing, and his eyes seemed to betray the struggle which I came to see in his poetry—the struggle of the image to keep afloat in the mighty tide of his words. He said: "You cannot be this part—you are too young." Then he read, with a voice like a choric chant. The voice sounded strange and wonderful to me. It told me of the loveliness of the words and the beauty of the cadence of the language which poets use. Swinburne handed me the manuscript, after choosing a difficult passage for me to read. My ear had caught the cadence of the lines and I chanted as he had done. Imagine my delight when I heard Swinburne exclaim: "That is right, you have a fine, vibrating voice; appealing in its heroic quality."

Years afterwards I was telling my friend Henry Simpson, the poet, of my meeting with Swinburne. He had lived opposite Swinburne at Putney Hill for many years, and often used to see him passing along the road, up the hill and across the common, where he used to pause at the public-house for a glass of beer.

Swinburne never spoke unless the beer was cloudy. Then he would swear like thunder. The publican said that Swinburne never came on Sundays or Bank Holidays, avoiding, as he called it, *the trail of the serpent*. Swinburne used to walk with an air of dreamy abstrac-

tion, and only one sight would bring him back to earth: the sight of a baby in a perambulator. Then he would smile, chuck the baby under the chin and kiss it.

But whenever spring came round another and transfigured Swinburne would appear; in place of dreaminess would be a wild excitement which only primitive and country-bred folk can understand and share: the excitement called forth by witnessing the new birth of life; of budding tree and blossoming, of green grass growing and of birds singing as they make their nests; the excitement of release from winter's prison; an excitement which must have been universal before civilisation had learned to soften the rigours of the winter; long dark nights and roads with only the full moon to light the wayfarer; a cave-man sort of life for country folk. What more natural than that men should dance round the maypole when the ugly night of winter was over and the lovely spring appeared, or that the poet in Swinburne should rise up in joy—joy so intense that, as I have been told, the poet might be seen in spring dancing round a may-tree in his garden with hands lifted high in ecstasy.

The visit ended hopefully. "*Locrine*" was produced on the stage, and I played the part of Gwendoline. William Poel, who produced it for the Elizabethan Stage Society, had one of the greatest triumphs of his career. Frederic Harrison, the Positivist philosopher, wrote to William Poel a letter which I am sure pleased him and know delighted me:

March 21st, '99.

"Dear Mr. Poel,

"I must heartily congratulate you, and the Society, on the beautiful presentation of '*Locrine*'. . . . It is fine and romantic poetry, and it is very big in these days of rowdy pantomimes to present poetry, ideal wording and beautiful groups to the cultured few.

"Gwendoline was a real triumph . . . and played with great dignity, charm and power. Such an actress ought to have a great career.

"I thought the costuming fine and suggestive, and

certainly quite right in principle. The objection that 'if there is no back scenery there should be no fine costumes' is ridiculous; the costumes and poses are part of the character.

"The conventional stage scenery disturbs the attention. I am now quite a convert to the rule of no stage scenery. I don't think I can ever care again to see a good play 'mounted' with all the raree show tomfoolery and Gus Harris machinery fit only for *Olympia* or *The Musketeers*.

"If the tragedy is cold, that is because Algernon Charles is not *William*. Your part of it was as good as can be."

The Verse Play is out of favour nowadays; it suffers in silence under the most powerful of all censorships: the censorship of the box office. Money talks, and with what a raucous voice it does talk! Against its domineering voice the still, small voice of the spirit finds it hard to make itself heard. Yet it will be heard. The restoration of the theatre will come when Verse and Drama appear hand-in-hand on the stage again. They were heard in unison in ancient Greece. There everyone had the right to hear them freely.

We have the poets: Yeats, John Masefield, Laurence Binyon, Clifford Bax, Gordon Bottomley, John Drinkwater; all have written fine Verse Plays. I have heard some of their plays in Masefield's theatre on Boar's Hill: beautiful Verse Plays by John Masefield and by Gordon Bottomley, and know that if people—pit and gallery people—had the chance, they also would hear them gladly.

Perhaps the new theatre at Stratford-on-Avon may become the pioneer of the restoration of the Verse Play to its proper, predominant place in the theatre. The Director of the Shakespeare Theatre at Stratford-on-Avon, W. Bridges-Adams, knows both as actor and producer the splendour of the Verse Drama of the Greeks. Will he give England a chance to hear, year by

year, its own verse-drama as well? How more worthily could Shakespeare, the greatest of all our verse-dramatists, be honoured!

Since the memorable day when I heard Swinburne I have listened to many poets reading their verse, and always with enjoyment. Not that they invariably read well. Why should they? To read poetry well is a rare art which, like any other, depends on natural gift and on the cultivation of that gift. But whether they read well or ill, emphatically or monotonously, poets make me feel the ardour which burns in them until something of that ardour is kindled within myself.

Of all the poets I have heard reading their own poetry, Yeats stands out pre-eminent. His voice is beautiful and his diction supple. His restrained use of emphasis never interrupts the rhythm of the lines, and yet, so consummate is his art, that the emotions which the words themselves call forth are intensified and clarified by his speaking of the verse. Of the younger poets many read beautifully, as those who frequent the Poetry Book Shop which Mr. and Mrs. Harold Monro established know full well, but of them all I think that Humbert Wolfe has pleased me most. Thanks to Italian blood which flows mixed with English in his veins, his words have a fuller, richer sound than most purely English voices can produce. Yet of the poetry I have heard spoken the most beautiful was that of a—to me—unknown voice which I heard over the wireless on the night when the General Strike came to an end. After announcing the news, the voice spoke with beauty surpassing any that I have heard Blake's lines on Jerusalem. The emotion with which I listened to the concluding lines is evoked every time they recur to my memory:

I will not cease from mortal strife
Nor shall the sword sleep in my hand
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.

CHAPTER IV

ON TOUR

I

THE star of my destiny—in the melodramatic way stars have—had packed me off from Cheltenham to London, and now another star, as red as Mars, was sending me packing back again to the provinces.

I muse over this moment of my life, trying to recall the feelings which filled my mind and made me do what I was told. I cannot. Yet I can do better. I can feel a glow of admiration for the little child—myself—as I was in those days. A “grown-up” might have resented Shaw’s peremptory advice, but youth has a wisdom all its own. I was ready to go touring; but how to set about doing it? Then chance came along once again in the genial form of Ben Greet (Sir Philip Ben Greet). I was playing Olivia in William Poel’s production of “Twelfth Night.” Ben Greet was there, and shortly afterwards offered to engage me as leading lady. Dorothea Baird, brilliant and beautiful, who as Trilby was to set all London talking enthusiastically about her, had become engaged to H. B. Irving and had left the company to join Beerbohm Tree at His Majesty’s Theatre. It was to take her place that Ben Greet engaged me.

So here I am, with contract signed and sealed, to play leading lady in Ben Greet’s Comedy Company. I am to play Juliet, Desdemona, Ophelia, Peg Woffington, Lady Teazle and Beatrice.

But Chance all but took away what she had offered. Chance, that adept in the art of make-up, wears so many disguises. On this occasion, and not for this time only, as will be told, Chance came in the guise of a golden wig. Olivia was wearing it when Ben Greet saw her;

but when he sent for her, Lillah was wearing her own black curls. Ben Greet was disillusioned. "You are too young," he said, "and my leading lady must be fair." But Ben Greet is kind—none kinder ever breathed. Perhaps my consternation melted him, for he added: "Well, well, you're black but comely. You will do."

So there I was at last, planted firmly on the stage. Planted firmly, but how often transplanted! The company toured east and west, and north and south, from the Channel Islands to Edinburgh. How exciting it all was to be at last an actress, every day and all day. To travel in special carriages and to take our own scenery with us; to reach our destination, hurry off to our lodgings and run out to buy our food. "Two pound a week and find your own costumes" teaches economy. From ten in the morning prompt rehearsals till two o'clock, then home to dinner—an actress dines, if she dines at all, at three o'clock on rehearsal days. At six o'clock back to the theatre: make-up; curtain up; and after the play, tired out, off to bed. I met all, and more than all, of Priestley's "Good Companions" in the company. There was Ben Greet's sister, Harriet, wardrobe mistress, who mothered us. Thrifty, as well as kindly, she used to gather up carefully all the flowers that fell upon the stage: a trait amusingly chronicled by H. B. Irving, starred as the leading man of the company, when he wrote in her birthday book as a favourite quotation: "Gather ye roses while ye may."

Beside Ben Greet and H. B. Irving there were other actors and actresses who rose to fame. A. S. Homewood, Mark Blow, and later Laurence Irving, Miss Edyth Olive, and Miss Irene Rooke. Brother Dan was also of the company, keeping watch and ward over me, and winning the affection of everybody.

I was so eager, so confident and so inexperienced that I was ready to play any part that Ben Greet gave me. As ill-luck would have it, the first part I played was Beatrice in "Much Ado About Nothing." And what a hash I made of it! Have I not said that when I stood

declaiming on the Cheltenham hills it was the Tragic Muse that took my hand, whilst Comedy bided her time. Comedy still bided. The worldly wit of Beatrice proved so far beyond my powers that Ben Greet snatched the part away from me and gave it to Edyth Olive. But I had been brought up in a stern school. I wrote and told my father. I suppose I was looking for a little sympathy. I got something better; he replied: "It's good for you, my girl; it will make you learn to do better." It did.

Ben Greet gave me another chance. He made me play Peg Woffington in Charles Reade's and Tom Taylor's "Masks and Faces." I played it well. I could be gay and flamboyant. I went up a peg or two in Ben Greet's estimation; and when I played Juliet I was fully restored to his good graces. But, dear Ben Greet, you never knew what made me play Juliet with such tenderness and passion. I will tell you the secret now: It was Romeo. It was H. B. Irving. It was hopeless and unrequited love. For was not Irving's heart already given to another? With what a heaving bosom and with what shining eyes I went on to the stage for my performance of Juliet! The ballroom scene: Romeo will fall in love with me. His eyes like burning coal will light on mine. He wears his father's beautiful Romeo costume, his limbs, carved out of turquoise. Romeo sees me, comes towards me. I await with longing heart and downcast eyes. He will speak to me. He will say: "If I profane with my unworthiest hand This holy shrine" He doesn't, but whispers fiercely: "What the devil do I say?" Good-bye Romance! Farewell Romeo! I pull myself together. "Feed" Romeo with his cue. Henceforth I can be nothing more than a mother to him.

I still keep, and shall always treasure, the yellow satin programme printed specially in Jersey for the performance of "Othello," in which I played Emilia: a performance under the distinguished patronage and in the presence of His Excellency Major-General E. Hopton, C.B., Lieutenant Governor of the Channel Islands! We were touring the Islands, and on the five nights of

our tour played: "Masks and Faces," "Money," "Othello" (in the presence of His Excellency), "Two Roses" and "Creatures of Impulse."

A happy life, full of hard work, without which no one could have digested the food we sometimes had to eat. I loved it, and could have gone on touring for all those ten years; but one night when we were playing at Edinburgh I was told that Mr. Addison Bright had come all the way from London, sent by Mr. Wilson Barrett, to see me act. My lucky star shone that night, for I was playing Juliet, and I *could* play Juliet. I forgot all about Romeo, for was not London calling, and Wilson Barrett putting the call through? Addison Bright liked Juliet, and in a few days Wilson Barrett had asked Ben Greet to release me from my contract in order that I might go and act with him. Generous from the first day to the last that I was in his company, Ben Greet let me go, and before the week was out I was back in London again.

II 1896

The next day I found myself in Wilson Barrett's dressing-room. "The Sign of the Cross" was running in Manchester, and he wished to engage me to play the part of Berenice when he brought the play to London. Maud Jeffries was the saintly Mercia.

My first impression of Wilson Barrett was neither true nor happy. I saw only a pompous actor. Later on the impression changed. I found the generous and dear being, the great manager and yet greater man behind the affectations.

When I became at ease with him my gawkiness seemed to leave me. I was enthralled by his gestures, his voice, his "presence." Barrett had the traditional grand manner; now "resting," but presently to reappear.

Within a day or two I was at the Lyric Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue. Shakespeare and penury were left in the provinces. I was a London actress, with a weekly salary running into *two* figures, basking in the penumbra



Photograph by W. and D. Downey.

WILSON BARRETT AS "MARCUS"

in "The Sign of the Cross," by Wilson Barrett, at the Lyric Theatre, in 1897



Photograph by W. and D. Downey.

LILLAH MCCARTHY AS "MERCIA"

at the Lyric Theatre, in 1897

of Maud Jeffries's limelight, and growing under the astonishing and sure training of Wilson Barrett.

Wilson Barrett belonged to the "old days," and every picturesque trapping of the old days surrounded him. We took the grand manner with us when we travelled. Special carriages were engaged and hampers were placed in our carefully-guarded private compartments. When we travelled to Australia I might not speak to the other passengers. He believed that an actress should maintain an air of reserve and aloofness. I revolted against his methods then and believe in them now. There is sense as well as snobbery in the story that Cambridge men have told me. A college rule ordains that "the Master of this College may not dine with the Fellows more than once a week, lest by his superior wit he abash the same!" The star—and most of all the newly-risen star—should be content to be an evening star except on matinée days. The Theatre is a world with laws unto itself. There the unreal is made real. In any case, fashionable life is fatal to an actress, if only because she must be always in training: night clubs should be only a solace to the unsuccessful.

It was a great change for me to pass from Ben Greet's happy and inconsequential family to the rigours of Wilson Barrett's company. I began again with failure: the best of all beginnings. It was no doubt absurd for a slip of a girl to try to play the part of the dissolute patrician, Berenice, to the ample splendours of Maud Jeffries's saintly Mercia. I had to give an illusion of wickedness and satiety which my form and voice denied. I *did* try so hard to seem evil. I talked to brother Dan about it, but he was too good himself to be of much use. Wilson Barrett complained, again and again, that I must be more of the flesh and less of the spirit. I did not know what the word "flesh" implied. It was infuriating to be told by brother Dan, patting my head: "You are too young to understand." In the end Wilson Barrett lost patience and declared that if I could not play Berenice in England he would send me to America to play

Mercia, the virgin, for which part I seemed naturally suited.

Wilson Barrett was an earnest and untiring producer and manager, although his methods seem old-fashioned in the light of the stage of to-day. He allowed us little peace. When we were not rehearsing there were frequent lessons in fencing and voice production. When we were on tour even our leisure was organised. On Sunday evening we would be summoned to his hotel to hear him read a play or talk to us. His was a school of discipline and authority. Even the books we read were chosen by "The Chief." It was an autocracy of the theatre, and Barrett insisted that we should have little or no life beyond the stage and his vigilance. It was in Barrett's company, too, that I first met two of the finest actors of our day: Haidée Wright and Horace Hodges, both great artists and both excelling in character parts. I shall ever be grateful to this remarkable man: in little ways so laughable, but in big ways so lovable. Wilson Barrett felt his responsibility and discharged it like a man. He seems old-fashioned now. He may have been unable to understand the artists' creed: "I believe in Michael Angelo," and all the rest of it, but he knew what right and wrong are, and did right. Barrett may have offended the taste of artists, but nevertheless he helped thousands in their way through life. I know it. For many have told me so. Even to this day I receive letters which show how these plays of his, which the artist in me came to regard with pity, helped people in their lives. Here is one which comes whilst I write this chapter. Artists may protest that art and morality have nothing to do with one another. They have taught me the lesson well, and yet this letter makes me wonder. . . .

"When in my seventeenth year, I was taken by some seniors to my first London theatre—the youth was almost stupidly innocent, idealistic and utterly ingenuous in matters worldly. The play was 'The Sign of the Cross,' and you were understudying

Miss Maud Jeffries's Mercia to Mr. Wilson Barrett's lead.

"Truthfully, I think at the moment of writing these lines as vitally as I thought on that memorable evening, that your personal representation of what was most beautiful, the noblest and the sweetest of what one looks for in womanhood, was so inspiring that I can assure you that perhaps you created something which actually proved to be a real influence for the future in at least one obscure life."

III 1897

I played with Wilson Barrett for seasons covering eight years, and in this time toured England, America and the Antipodes. Our plays were "Virginius," "Claudian," "Hamlet," "Othello," "The Manxman," "Ben-my-Chree" and "The Silver King." What I learned from him was superimposed upon what I had learned from the scholarly methods of William Poel.

These diversities of method of production helped me to understand the theatre with a certainty otherwise unattainable. Just at the time of my career when I might have drifted into too purely intellectual methods, I went from William Poel to Ben Greet. Just when I might have got into the habit of wearing his casual cloak of provincial Shakespearean methods I went to Wilson Barrett and broadened my phylacteries in romantic melodrama. And then, after eight years, I went to the Court Theatre, where I had to wear close-fitting clothes designed by Shaw. And so I found that no less for the actress than for the fool "Motley's the only wear."

What I learned in the theatre during those years with Wilson Barrett was enforced by travel. I had holidays in Italy. I gave my heart to Venice in the days of her grace and dignity. I knew the Venice of sheer spiritual beauty. The scene is enshrined in the memory of every man and woman of my generation. Warm, blue-black nights, singing and guitars upon the lagoon, balloons of

light swaying against the dark water, days in the Accademia, learning something of painting, feeling more and more deeply for beauty, surrendering more and more to the incomprehensible mysteries of life, as the enigmatic smile upon her face shows that Mona Lisa must have done.

I can never forget the Sunday afternoon when I went into St. Mark's. The church was crowded; the altar shone with jewels, the warm air was fragrant with incense and flowers. It was during Evensong that I went there. A hush had settled upon the dim beauty of the church. I could see the bronze doors, the glittering mosaics, the line of bronze figures across the sanctuary, through a vagueness of shadows. As the people went out of the church I hid behind a pillar. I was alone.

The sudden possession of the scene by myself was one of the most moving experiences I have ever known. I suppose it is a perfect state to be at once intellectually and emotionally conscious of beauty. To be aware of the proportions, the colours, the simplicity of a building, and at the same time to be conscious of the majestic mastery of the architect who made it.

The door of St. Mark's closed. There was no light save that of the waning sun, diffused and coloured by the windows. Intense emotion turned to fear. I ran to the door and forced it open. I turned back once and looked into the shadows of the church, to the altar, the bronze doors, the arches of golden mosaics, dim in the half-light. I passed into the square. Venice had gathered there to hear the band playing "Lohengrin." Here, too, was stillness, but it was the stillness of life. The stillness of the church had been the stillness of death. I walked across the square down past the Doge's palace, and stepped into a black gondola. The gondolier smiled as we swept along the Grand Canal to Desdemona's house.

England restrains and soothes. Italy irradiates the soul. Is this why English gentlemen used to make the grand tour and linger so long in Italy?

IV 1898-99

The cities of Europe developed my knowledge, but it was in the colonies and dominions, so memory tells me, that my character first assumed any shape at all. The insularity of English taste is displeasing to all but themselves. We used to be inclined to patronise the Dominions, and to feel that the emotions of loyalty and deference are all that they should be if they are one-sided. Time, thank goodness, is changing all that. I thank Heaven that I learned the absurdity of this attitude long ago, while I was still young and pliable. I toured Australia, Africa and New Zealand with Wilson Barrett. The first time I went as Maud Jeffries's shadow. The second time I was Barrett's leading lady, and all doors were open to me. So far as the theatre was concerned, we repeated the performances of London. "The Silver King" in Auckland was the same as "The Silver King" at the Lyric; but the response of the audience was different. The romantic, melodramatic theme caught them and held and thrilled them.

I came to know something of the amazing story of the colonising of the new countries. I discovered vigour and fortitude which are often less evident—though no less frequent—at home.

The second time I went to Australia was in a season of drought and pestilence. Rabbits were piled up against the fences over which they had tried to climb to find water. As the train crossed the desert dry locusts beat like hail against the windows. I yearned to get away; yet now I long to go to Australia again.

We came to New Zealand. It was like going home. New Zealand is England and Scotland and Ireland: the Great Britain of the Southern Seas. Wellington is England, with the English tranquillity. Dunedin is Scotland, dour and determined. Auckland is Ireland, an emerald land. New Zealand keeps the charm of the homeland, and adds to it a beauty of its own. Tradition

goes free there, and not in fetters, and because of that it is more beloved.

I breathed again the air of England: New Zealand is a green land, a grass land. The fresh odours of the green grass came to meet me as I drove along. They bade me welcome. They brought back all the Vale of Cheltenham before my eyes: the green fields of my childhood.

V 1902

We sailed from New Zealand to the Cape and reached Capetown just after the South African War had come to an end. The country was beside itself with excitement over the peace. "Peace hath its victories no less renowned than war!" There were British soldiers eager to adore us—any or all of us. Were we not the first English actresses to greet Mars since his engagements in the field! They were still thinking in terms of engagements. They made advances—as British soldiers always do. Unto every damsel a soldier or two. In Capetown a major sat upon my balcony and said, now that he was free from duty, he would take me to settle upon a chicken-farm in Ireland. Another of yet more exalted rank would take me to Simla, where I could act in all the amateur productions. In Durban and Johannesburg I used to be proposed to with well-bred decorum and without embarrassing insistence. But the preoccupation of work, reinforced by brother Dan's vigilance, shepherded me back to the stage, whereon my emotions could have unlimited scope for expression.

I sometimes wonder now what my fate might have been had my duennas—Wilson Barrett and brother Dan—been less vigilant. Could I have assimilated myself to Simla? If I had married the major and gone to live on his poultry farm should I have made ducks and drakes of my life?

I had come to know and to understand Wilson Barrett by this time. My own rawness was passing. The energy of the Dominions and wide travel were helping

time to make a woman of me; that is, were making me in many ways younger than I had ever been. The bow which my father had drawn so taut was beginning to unbend. Wilson Barrett saw that I was growing up, and believing in my talent, talked to me of my future on our way back to England. He suggested that I should go out with a company of my own when we returned to England and play *Lady Macbeth*, *Phêdre* and *Magda*.

Home at last!

Whilst we were producing new plays Wilson Barrett set about forming the syndicate which was to support my venture. When it was almost complete he was obliged to go into a nursing-home for—as was thought—a slight operation. His malady proved mortal. Wilson Barrett died. The future which had seemed so bright became in that instant obscure, and I was left without a friend in the theatrical world. I was sad. I was perplexed; for whilst we had been touring in the Southern Hemisphere a change had come over the English theatre. The romantic dramas of the Wilson Barrett school were passing out of fashion, and with them was passing also the broad, romantic style of acting in which for the last eight years I had been trained. Pinero was the mode. Public taste was backing away from romance to realism. I felt the changing temper of the times. I must escape from London and be alone. I must make a fresh start.

One morning I took a train to Exeter; my only luggage a change of clothes in a knapsack, the Bible, Shakespeare's Sonnets, and a book of Blake's poems. I had a few pounds in my purse.

I was asleep when the train reached Exeter and did not wake until it pulled into Launceston. I peered out of the window and saw the strange name on the station through the alternate streaks of lamplight and night shadows. I left the train and found a little hotel. I slept as I could never sleep in London, and in the morning, with the golden colours of August spreading over the

Cornish fields, I set out along the highroad. My food was bread and cheese and apples. The long experience of the theatre was far behind me, and I was swinging down the road to Tintagel. For fourteen days I tramped through Cornwall, dipping down to the coast, buying my food when I was hungry, and new shoes when my old ones were worn out. I never opened my books.

I was alone; sleeping upon the moors when I was tired. Gradually I began to see where I stood in my career: a parting of the ways. I would follow some new way: go farther—much farther. I would learn anew my art. I would learn how to make mind and feeling work together to help me. That is the way to greatness—all greatness. On my last day I went up to the moors and walked for many miles. I became tired. I lay down and slept. Hours passed. When I awoke the sun was slipping over the edge of the world. Evening rose up on the moors. I got up, picked the burrs from my skirt, and started to walk down the hill to the sea.

A fisherman came up the hill, heavy-footed and old. He wore a gold earring in one ear. His eyes, suspicious, Cornish eyes, with the dark Celtic mysteries slumbering in them, looked at me from under shaggy eyebrows. I said:

"I have walked a long way. What place is this?"

"Fowey," he answered, and walked on.

Fay beings still live in Cornwall: the invaders—Saxon and Dane and Norman—have never seen them, and so they live on, lonely because Pan is dead. I went to the inn and asked for food. Here I was cut off from England. The little town seemed to be on the other side of a veil.

I went down to the harbour. It was growing dark. The fishing-boats were moving out into the great circle of the night, their lamps rising and falling against the water. I took a boat and paddled out. I must find out where I was in my stage world and where I ought to go. I paddled among the fishing-craft and heard the mumbling and singing of the fishermen; I rowed farther out,

and as I rowed I heard the voice of my father echoing from the Cheltenham hills:

I am not a God afar off, I am a brother and a friend:

Within your bosoms I reside and you reside in me.

Lo! we are One, forgiving all evil, not seeking recompense

. . . My mountains are my own, and I will keep them to myself:

The Malvern and the Cheviot, the Wolds, Plinlimmon and Snowdon

Are mine. Here will I build my laws of Moral Virtue.

.

Rise up, ye women that are at ease;

Hear my voice, ye careless daughters. . . .

I rowed back, moored the boat, went to my inn and slept with the sound of Fowey water in my ears. The next morning I returned to London to look for work and determined to go on looking till I found the work I wanted.

CHAPTER V

"LONDON CALLING"

I 1905

MY ten years were up. I had served my apprenticeship. The ten years were flown which, when Shaw passed sentence on me, had seemed to the young ambitious and artlessly confident girl to spell perpetual banishment from London. I had learned my business. I had acted in the provinces. I had known the drab of theatrical lodgings and found that it was often made bright by the motherly kindness of landladies who eked out a slender livelihood by "doing" for the profession. I had survived their cooking; had learned to laugh instead of cry when one dear landlady, at a little party I was giving, had served up a fowl cooked with all its inside undisturbed and odorous. The genial and generous enthusiasm of provincial audiences had dispelled the gloom of England's "satanic mills." I had seen those northern cities which are pillars of cloud by day and pillars of fire by night. When I came back I hated the clipped speech of the well-bred Londoner, preferring by far the chirrup of the Cockney. I disliked the way that London seemed to look down on the provinces. Arnold Bennett had not yet shown London the glamour of the Five Towns. I was a stalwart defender of the faithful provinces. I believed what they told me, these shy but proud provincials. "We breed England's best"; they said; "raise them for export to London." "We do the work; they play." London to them was no more than the child of Arthur Balfour's famous epigram: "the child who licks the postage stamps imagines he conducts the correspondence."

Later years have weakened, but have not been able

to destroy, my belief in these arrogant claims; for I have lived long in London, and have got to know that it is the greatest manufacturing city in Great Britain, and that the vast body of it is as provincial as the provinces, and therefore can claim to share their virtues.

I had acted in distant parts of the Empire, in rough places; and had come to love all the stout-hearted hospitable men who so often live far harder lives than any we know here; and to love yet more the stout-hearted women who go with them and on whom the happiness and success of their men depend. What I learnt then I have since confirmed, for wherever I have travelled in the Empire overseas I have discovered that if the woman is stout-hearted and kind the household and the farm flourish; but where she is faint-hearted failure stands waiting on the stoop.

In my youthful touring days it would have damped my ardour to know that only a part—perhaps a very little part—of the applause which used to greet us was a tribute to the talents of the players. But now the knowledge that it must have been so adds pleasure to remembrance. We strolling players were welcomed and fêted not only because we were bright young things—or their Victorian counterparts—but also because we were, all unconsciously, little missionaries of Empire. We awakened memories of home in lonely hearts: in those who whilst building new homes kept sweet and green memories of the home they or their forbears had left behind them. And I have often wondered whether other professions also might not go on tour and help to make closer the bonds of sympathy and understanding which alone can bind together the British commonwealth of Nations. It might lighten the "white man's burden." It might spare many a Kipling from going along the Empire like a ganger along a train, swinging his heavy hammer to test the axles and prove by the noise it makes how strong it is! He could spend all his time taking "tired people to the islands of the blest."

I had learnt my business and under many masters.

Hermann Vezin taught me the alphabet: taught me to speak clearly; a useful accomplishment for an actress in those days when, if the pit and gallery could not hear her, they took care that she should hear them. Their artistic tastes were less highly developed than ours. They had not learned to appreciate the dramatic quality of inaudibility. It was speak up or shut up in those days; no strong silent actor for them. The cult of the indistinct on the modern stage is but a passing one. Voice production is being taught now, and better taught than ever it was. There are at the present day actors and actresses with the beautiful English voice who are as clear of diction as any of us were in the days of which I write, and presently the minor keys and pianissimos of the moment will be known for what they are, the results of affectation or of adenoids. May it be soon; for the talkie tone is waiting for the beautiful English voice; rotund and clear, with just that overtone of Doric, of Yorkshire, of Scotch, of Welsh or Irish, which gives words a fuller sound and charges them with a deeper emotion. You can hear these English voices on the platform and on the wireless. Lloyd George, Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir Daniel Hall, and some of those nameless men and women—the announcers—the beauty of whose voices excels that of all others I have known.

Poel taught me more than any other, till I came to Shaw, that work and work alone can bring talent into the service of its owner, and that thinking is the most important part of an actor's work. From these teachings I gradually invented—it took me many years—a way of learning my part. I never learned it. I read and re-read the play, paying no attention whatever to my part, until the play as a whole had taken on a pattern in my mind: assumed, as it were, an architectural form. Then came the task of seeing my part in relation with the whole and in balance with all the rest, and when that was done I knew my part. The words had engraved themselves in my mind. Last to come, the words were soonest to go, and people have often found it strange

that I do not remember the lines of plays in which I have acted many times. They are quite gone, but come back very quickly when I get to work again on the architecture of the play. There are some actors and actresses—and good ones too—who read nothing but their parts. How they succeed I know not, and yet they do. I have even met one who was yet more economical of his energy. He had played, and played well, in one of Chekov's plays. I went round to congratulate him. Admiring Chekov as I do, I asked him what he thought of Chekov's way of writing. "Who?" he asked. "Chekov," I replied. "I never heard of him," said he.

From William Poel I came under the hand of Ben Greet—a large and lax hand. All you had to do was to do your best; tired or fit, well or ill, you must give to the last ounce all that is in you, and give it cheerfully. Your life is the theatre. No scurrying in at the last minute nor scurrying away the moment the play is over: long hours and constant rehearsals; you owe it to "the profession."

Then came the last and longest years of my apprenticeship, under Wilson Barrett: breadth and flamboyance; no economy of emotion.

From apprentice I had become improver, and now was a full craftsman.

Then one day brother Dan, become also a good craftsman, looks up from the paper he is reading in the sitting-room of our lodgings, and exclaims: "Your red-headed man has written a play." "Who?" I said. "Why, that dramatic critic of the *Saturday Review* who gave you such a wiggling." "Not Bernard Shaw?" I asked. "That's the chap," says he. I said no more. It was an omen; for, almost to the day, the ten years were up.

I wrote to Shaw and told him that I had done what he said I must and was come back, and might I go and see him. The answer was a summons to the Shaws' flat in Adelphi Terrace. I obeyed. I climbed the stairs, past the gate with iron spikes, and with a self-possession I did not feel, announced myself. He looked at me, gave a broad smile, and said: "Why, here's Ann Whitefield."

At first I thought that he had mixed me up with some other girl, but as he talked it dawned upon me that Ann Whitefield must be the woman in his new play. Presently he got up, shook hands, and said, "Yes, you're Ann. Good-bye"; and, wondering and hoping, I went away.

The hope was soon fulfilled; a few days afterwards this letter came:

"Dear Miss McCarthy,

"I want to ask you two questions 'without prejudice.'

"1. If the Stage Society were to ask you to play for them on Sunday evening the 8th April, and on the afternoon of the 10th and 11th in an exceedingly difficult and possibly shockingly unpopular leading part, by which you gain nothing but three guineas to pay for your cabs, and enough trouble and worry to take quite 50 guineas' worth of energy and temper out of you, would you say Yes or No?

"2. Did you ever read a play by me called 'Man and Superman,' and if so, can you imagine any woman playing the part of Ann Whitefield?

"If not, I will send you a copy.

"Yours faithfully,

"G. Bernard Shaw."

There were postponements and muddles which do not matter now. They were announced in a series of sharp little notes which Shaw wrote to me. In March he wrote again:

"Mr. Vedrenne, of the Court Theatre, wants to see you about the proposed nine matinées of 'Man and Superman'. . . . Be as lenient with him financially as you can, for the Court is a very small theatre, and the profits of nine matinées still smaller; so do not make him pay what Frohman would pay you or the poor little man will be ruined. . . . In a year from this you will be so famous that you won't look at my

poor little plays and matinées; so I may as well make the most of you whilst you are still attainable."

II

Thus began my association with Shaw and Shaw's plays, and with it a new life began for me; the new life of the Court Theatre and of the new women—ever certain, ever Shaw.

It began, however, not with my playing Ann Whitefield—she came into my stage life later—but with acting Nora, in "John Bull's Other Island." The play had been running at the Court for some time when I met Shaw. Ellen O'Malley had already created the part, and all I had to do was to follow as best I might the fine impersonation she had made of Nora. For a long time the scenes of my life were the Court Theatre, where I played, and Hyde Park, where I walked round and round the Serpentine learning the Shaw parts. There was one interlude whilst we were waiting to produce "Man and Superman." Tree took me to act with him at His Majesty's Theatre. It was like going away into the country, the atmosphere of the two theatres and the methods of the two producers were so different. Shaw, serious, painstaking, concentrated, relentless in pursuit of perfection. Tree, using the broader brush of the impressionist; casual but full of inventiveness.

So once again I see-sawed between realism and romanticism, and again learnt theatrical technique from both. Tree was a brilliant actor and producer, and although Shakespeare's tragedies, "Julius Caesar" and "Antony and Cleopatra," may have eluded the scope of his genius, no actor of his time could excel him in comedy.

Among the plays put on during this season at His Majesty's was "Agatha" by Mrs. Humphry Ward, the novelist. Mrs. Humphry Ward was regular in her attendance at rehearsals, but, no matter how much the turmoil, she always remained placid with the placidity of one of the stalls come on to a performance after a long and pleasant dinner, ruminating. How flat we all felt

and how neglected, for the producers we had known were not like that—not negative, but positive; patient perhaps, violent perhaps, but never placid. Even when they were patient you felt that they were watching as jealously as French mothers at the seaside, ready to seize every chance vociferously to correct their offspring. How we tittered when, the rehearsal having lasted beyond the allotted time—as rehearsals always do—Mrs. Humphry Ward rose composedly in the middle of a scene, gathered up her belongings and said: “I must go. This is my quiet hour. I always spend it with my grandchildren.” I contrast the scene with one with Shaw as author. A lovely day. Rehearsal starts. Enter Louis Calvert with cigar, knickerbockered, very talkative. Shaw’s voice rapping out: “What you need is a day’s golf; rehearsal dismissed.” A day’s golf was just what we did want to freshen us up. It did us far more good than a perfunctory rehearsal.

In “Agatha” I had to play the part of Viola Tree’s mother. Tree sat in the stalls for the dress rehearsal; but in my most intense moment he leapt up and said: “This will never do. . . . You look much too young.” He whirled me into my dressing-room and pushed me into a chair. The pattern of the wall-paper was a conventional entanglement of green leaves. Tree looked at my grease paints and then at the wall; moistened his hands, rubbed them on the green leaves of the paper and smeared the mess on my cheeks; dragged my white wig off, jammed a dirty, iron-grey wig in its place; whirled me back to the stage. I felt like Jezebel after her fall.

The season at His Majesty’s Theatre finished, I went back to Shaw’s plays: a truant returning reluctantly to school; but all reluctance vanished when I found Ann Whitefield waiting for me. Ann Whitefield, in “Man and Superman,” is a very modern young woman; she knows what she wants and means to get it. I created her from three women, one avaricious and selfish, another a gay, amusing and charming woman, and a third, myself.

Shaw’s method was to read the play over to the

company, after having read it to a group of personal friends. The parts were then handed to us, and we were allowed to stumble through them. His own conceptions of the characters were withheld. He never harassed us with interruptions in the raw beginning stage. But as he listened to us his pencil was never still; and at the end of each rehearsal we would get plenty to ponder over in the shape of brilliant and brief little personal notes.

He would wait for a week before he came up on to the stage to interfere with our work. Then began a revelation of his knowledge of the theatre and of acting. With complete unselfconsciousness he would show us how to draw the full value out of a line. He could assume any role, any physical attitude, and make any inflection of his voice, whether the part was that of an old man or a young man, a budding girl or an ancient lady. With his amazing hands he would illustrate the mood of the line. We used to watch his hands in wonder. I learned as much from his hands, almost, as from his little notes of correction. The care with which Shaw approached the details of his production is indicated in a letter which he wrote to me before "Man and Superman" was presented.

"Yes, I think that will do very well; only don't have any light-blue ribbon with the white muslin; use violet or purple.

"Mrs. William Morris wore a black mantle with violet lining at her husband's funeral: that was what gave me the idea of the dress in the first act. Ann should not produce an impression of artless simplicity; there should be a certain pomegranate splendour lurking somewhere in the effect—just a touch even in the muslin dress—I trust your judgment in this matter; do what you like.

"G. B. S."

Before I appeared as Ann I finished Shaw's season of "John Bull's Other Island." During the rehearsals of the new play we often lunched together at the little Queen's

Restaurant, near to the Court Theatre. The lunches were of apples, cheese, macaroni, salads, and, to crown them, a chilly milk and soda. He throve upon this fare. I ate it because everything he did seemed right to me; but it always left me hungry; so true is it that what is one man's meat is another man's poison.

I used often to wonder in those days why Shaw had not gone the way of other Irish poets. Yeats and Synge had stayed in their land, becoming one with its yearning sorrows, and sharing the sense of its ancient wrongs. They saw poetry in Ireland's distress. Shaw saw problems. He was too much of a fighter to stay there. If persecution there must be, he would play the part of persecutor; so what Ireland lost, we gained. Shaw once said: "If I had gone into the hills nearby to look back upon Dublin and to ponder upon myself, I too might have become a poet like them. But I prided myself on thinking clearly, and thinking clearly, could not stay. Whenever I took a problem or a state of life of which my Irish contemporaries sang sad songs, I always pursued it to its logical conclusion and then inevitably, it resolved itself into comedy. That is why I did not become an Irish poet."

I asked him one day why he had come to live in England instead of seeking his inspiration among the Dublin poets—George Moore, A. E., Yeats and the others. He answered: "Lord bless you, I'm old enough to be A. E.'s father; and George Moore had not discovered Ireland then. He was in Paris studying painting. He hadn't even discovered himself. The Ireland that you know did not exist. I could not stay there, dreaming my life away on the Irish hills. England had conquered Ireland; so there was nothing for it but to come over and conquer England. Which, you will notice, I have done pretty thoroughly."

The growth of Shaw's spiritual quality is revealed in his later plays. It begins in "Candida" and "John Bull's Other Island"; he comes to grips with religion openly in "Androcles and the Lion" and "Saint Joan."

But after everything has been said about his plays and his philosophy, the best remains unsaid; for the best resides not in his plays, nor his philosophy, but in his personality. I never knew what a vivid personality meant until I knew Shaw. He, of all men, is most alive; not only on grand occasions but all the time. Walk with him through the streets of any town. A photographer approaches, furtively. But Shaw has seen him and immediately, not without taking thought, he adds a cubit to his stature. Snap: a perfect picture of the man, tall, resolute, picturesque. Then it is the turn of the autograph girl. She comes with pen and opened book. "No, my dear," says Shaw, "I shall not give you my autograph, but write me a letter which compels an answer and it's yours."

It is Shaw's sanity and his lack of humbug and sentimentality which are permanently astonishing even to his friends. His greatest quality—the source of his paradox and his comedy—is that he dares to forge the last link in every chain of thought.

CHAPTER VI

THE COURT MISSION

I 1906

SHAW restored the English theatre to its rightful place in national life. Other dramatists also played their part. J. M. Barrie was a pioneer in the restoration. Like David he went out to meet the giant of mechanical and uninspired romanticism which he found straddling all over the way. Armed with the sling and the stone of fancy and realism, Peter Pan struck a shrewd blow. Managers who had run the show in which the giant was exhibited took reluctant notice. Arthur Collins saw the omen and began to think about changing the time-honoured tradition of the Christmas pantomime at Drury Lane. I know, because one night I met him at dinner, and the conversation turned on Peter Pan. Collins said resignedly: "Well! this is the sort of thing they want, so we must give it them."

Then came Shaw. But although his plays were soon winning applause abroad, England long remained suspicious of the new drama and hostile to it, and no less to the new methods of production which accompanied it. The Court Theatre became the mission hall of the new drama, and all who frequented there were banded together in the determination to make its message acceptable to the theatre-going public. The General Booth of this Salvation Army of the stage was the wild young Irishman with his pocket full of plays. From the moment I joined in the adventure the tambourine of my enthusiasm waxed loud. Had I not already found myself trying to escape from the bonds of conven-

tional drama which I had worn so long? I had already begun to wonder whether perhaps the quality of "Mercia" was not strained. Brother Dan, who had been with me all these years and who had become a fine actor, helped to fan, all unconsciously, my discontent. He had read for the bar, was highly cultivated; so highly indeed that he used to make us read aloud Carlyle and Ruskin, and all the authors of uplift of those times. I loved their language and their intensity of conviction, but fear that it was for their dramatic rather than their intellectual powers that I admired them. One day brother Dan began to talk about the stage. No one listens more than she must to an elder brother; but I overheard him say whilst talking of one of our plays "It isn't drama, it's barratry." I should have taken no notice had not the company begun to laugh. "What is barratry?" I asked. "Look in the dictionary," said Dan. I did, and read: "Barratry: fraud or gross negligence of master or crew to the prejudice of shipowners." Very slowly then, and afterwards, I began to see the meaning of the jest—that playwrights and actors owe it to the public to be loyal to life; to sail the theatrical ship like seamen and not like landlubbers made up as pirates. I went down to Cornwall pondering these things, and came back to find theatrical salvation in the mission hall of the Court Theatre.

I played Ann Whitefield in "Man and Superman." She was a "new woman" and she made a new woman of me. The women of the previous day, on or off the stage, had been of the stage, stagey. Ann was of the earth, earthy. What an affront to tradition! A real woman on the stage! No wonder people were scandalised! They pulled Ann to pieces, and the more they did so the more real she appeared. But oh! the disappointment to look for sawdust and find only flesh and blood. From being a horrid warning, Ann became a model. Men may have looked askance at her—she was not nice—but women with truer courage stared at her and discovered that she was no mannequin owing the

semblance of life to draperies. She was a living woman—one of themselves. Women, many of them, have told me that Ann brought them to life and that they remodelled themselves upon Ann's pattern. The men—the conventional men who had made women after their own imagining and according to their predilections—disapproved of Ann: unladylike! She was insistent when she should have been submissive. What is to become of the home? She had a will of her own instead of one of theirs. Shaw, with his love of paradox, must have been delighted when he thought that the Court—symbol of all that is decorous and decent—was become the scene of women's emancipation; a double emancipation, for Ann set the leading lady—and with her all the ladies of the theatre—free, and she set the world of women free. Whenever the slim girl of the present day lights up a cigarette whilst she stands waiting for a train, I feel I must go up and say to her, as Shaw once said to me: "Why, you're Ann Whitefield," and when Amy Johnson flies across the deserts and the seas from here to Cape Town and back again, I want to tell her "Ann Whitefield gave you those strong and lovely wings." Mrs. Pankhurst, who Heaven knows never lacked resolution, herself told me that Ann Whitefield had strengthened her purpose and fortified her courage. Shaw was the Perseus who rescued Andromeda from the talons of the dragon!

Tanner, the artist in "Man and Superman" who eventually marries Ann, is described by Shaw thus:

" . . . Jupiter rather than Apollo. He is prodigiously fluent of speech, restless, excitable . . . possibly a little mad. He is carefully dressed, not from the vanity that cannot resist finery, but from a sense of the importance of everything he does. . . . A sensitive, susceptible, exaggerative, earnest man; a megalomaniac, who would be lost without a sense of humour."

Clearly, whoever else Shaw had in mind when he created Tanner, he was not altogether oblivious of himself: "fluent of speech, excitable—possibly a little

mad"—as madness is reckoned by the deadly sanity of the dull—"carefully dressed . . . from a sense of the importance of everything he does . . . sensitive . . . exaggerative, earnest . . . lost without a sense of humour." Yes, Shaw to the life! We would have it so; but Shaw insisted that what he had written was a precise description of his rival Hyndman, the Socialist leader.

Shaw is his own worst enemy. He so provokes men by his unorthodox pronouncements, carries them away so completely by his realism, that he gives them no time to observe the beauty of the language which he uses. Yet those who read his plays and prefaces know that he stands as one of the lordly company—to be numbered on the fingers of one hand—of present-day writers who are masters of the art and craft of prose writing. Towards the end of "Man and Superman" there is a love scene between Ann and Tanner. It is of a beauty which no words of mine can describe. Beauty of characterisation, beauty of story, beauty of ideas, all woven together into a fabric so fine as to obscure the exquisiteness of the material—the words—which are used in it. At the climax of the scene Tanner takes Ann in his arms and says: "I love you. The Life Force enchants me. I have the whole world in my arms when I clasp you. . . ." And, as the play closes, Tanner sums up all things with words that sound like sighs, "Ann looks happy: but she is only triumphant, successful, victorious. That is not happiness, but the price for which the strong sell their happiness."

At one of the rehearsals, Louis Calvert, touched by the scene, turned to me and said: "You would be a great dramatic actress—a great tragedienne—away from plays like this." Maybe! but away from plays like that I should never have developed as a woman.

II

In April 1906 I was married, and Shaw greeted the occasion in characteristic fashion:

"I seriously think the Court Theatre must be transferred to a tent on Putney Heath. The returns for the week just to hand are disgraceful: only £67 17s. 5d. per performance. In short, 'Brassbound' has been a failure; 'Barbara' has been a failure; 'Candida' has been a failure; the sole successes have been the two plays you appeared in and now you have gone and shattered the dream by getting married. I ask you, how is the thing to go on?"

He ended the letter thus:

"Rodin writes that the bust is a success—that people define my character from it and call me a 'young Moses! ! !' Justice at last—from a Frenchman."

Reading the letter again unveils a mental picture—a picture of Rodin's studio in Paris. Immediately after my marriage, I was in Paris and went with the Shaws to Rodin's studio. It was outside Paris—a huge room, floating like an ark upon the sea of a wonderful garden. Rodin had been working on Shaw's bust for some time when I first saw it. It looked like the portrait of a pleasant, ordinary sort of man; but something that Shaw said at lunch that day attracted Rodin's attention and made him laugh. From that moment Rodin watched his model like a lynx; G. B. S. was at his very best—he generally is. The next time I saw the bust it was changed. Rodin had discovered Shaw and the bust had become one of the finest pieces of his sculpture. And so the world owes yet one more great work of art to Shaw's brilliance as a talker. One work of art begot another! For surely everyone who has listened to Shaw's conversation recognises that it deserves that title. Yes! those impatient

of eclipse may say: but he is a very bad listener! He is not! Shaw is not a listener at all. This defect—and defect it certainly is—is due not to discourtesy—Shaw is the most courteous and considerate of men—but to the fact that his mind is always busy, turning over the theme of a play, or living a scene in it, wrestling with the characters which, because they are his, are as wayward as he is and refuse to do what he tells them or think as he would have them think. You meet and begin to talk to him. He settles down to enjoy a luxury he has never had—a good listening. But in a moment a word touches off the train of his thought. He does not silence you; he forgets you and, if there is any sense in you at all, you subside cheerfully into the role of listener. It does you both good. Shaw's occasional efforts as a polite listener are diverting to his friends. He is tired, does not want to talk, or thinks so. If Queen Victoria will be good, so will he. Then up speaks youth come out from Oxford to reclaim him; to persuade him to join in endowing professorships in Erse in English Universities—so to bring light to those dark places—etc., etc., . . . until Shaw, his face a figure of terror, rushes from the room exclaiming: "My God, that letter to *The Times*. I forgot to post it," and no more is seen of him till dinner time. No, Shaw does not suffer fools gladly! But take him to some great factory. His quick and sure intelligence grasps the processes in a flash, although he has never heard of the technicalities before. He gathers up the new knowledge in his mind, and now, having got all there is to be got, he is laughing with the managers and the foremen, telling them how to make better provision for the welfare of the staff, or testing by his declamation the acoustics of the theatre for the working people.

III

Actresses have often written about what they feel, but there are few books to show by what cold, laborious methods they learn their business . . . the business of

appearing to feel to order. No other art demands so much control of the emotions. Painters or writers, if they feel tired or uninspired, can rest and choose their own hours for beginning to work again. They, if their subject bores them, can paint out the canvas or tear up the script. But the actress must be able to dish up her feelings, as a good cook does, punctually to the minute. Half past eight she walks on the stage smiling! Five minutes past nine her heart glows with newly-kindled love! She is already a devoted wife. Twenty-three minutes to ten the actress is locked in the embrace of her lover. She dislikes him cordially. At ten-thirty her heart is broken, night after night for the run of the play. At eleven prompt she dies! whilst in full possession of her faculties, mental and physical: and all these unrealities must seem true in the eyes of the audience. Inspiration may take care of the pounds but technique only can take care of the pence—the small incessant things the actress has to do.

It was again Shaw who taught me a wonderful lesson in the technique of control. Tragedy was still holding my hand too tight, and I used to play my part with my muscles all contracted. When I gripped Tanner in one of the scenes which we played together I did it so violently that Shaw rushed on to the stage and stopped me.

A few days afterwards he brought Mrs. William Archer, the wife of the dramatist, to the theatre. She had learned the art of body control from Annie Payson Call, the authoress of "Power in Repose." After a month of lessons in muscular control, I could move any muscle and relax it as I wished, and from this time my acting developed a greater naturalness. I learned to move more easily and, when standing still, to remain if need be quite immobile. I learnt that one restless movement of the body may ruin the effect of a whole speech.

One night when Mrs. Patrick Campbell came round to see me she remarked in her deep 'cello notes: "I don't see how you stand still, doing nothing. How can you do it? It would drive me mad."

Control of bodily movement and of bodily repose, so essential to an actress, is rare among Westerners; but in the East it is part of everyday traditional knowledge. This I discovered one day when I was crossing the desert on the way to Tunis. I was riding near to the singing boy who was leading the caravan. I watched his beautiful face. It was perfectly formed and his eyes were big and deep, like black pansies. I asked him to sing for us as we travelled over the wide monotony of the sand. He relaxed all his body. I could see the muscles wilting under his clothes. Then, when he was completely limp, he parted his lips and sang. It was a song of the cultivator, a prayer to Allah to bless the seed of the earth. The notes were sudden, clear and perfect. I have never heard such singing and I have never seen a body so completely relaxed, so that the full power of the singer could be poured into his song.

The superb acting of the players in the Irish Theatre, as brilliant as any in our times, owed much to the mastery and genius of Yeats, who understands better than anyone how essential to the actor is economy of movement. I have heard it said that he taught this hard lesson by making fidgety actors and actresses stand in a barrel whilst they rehearsed their lines on the stage. Fashions change. Flamboyancy of movement and of utterance give place to frugality. But whatever fashion is in vogue, good acting can only be achieved by players whose bodies are as surely under control as are their expressions and their voices.

Whiskerandos will never be an actor unless he is able to stay there dying all night.

IV

Shaw worked hard at the production of his plays until the curtain went up before the public. After that nothing could induce him to attend a performance unless some change in the cast called for his attention as a matter of business. Such accidental visits usually

elicited notes from him. I print one which survives among my papers to show how painstaking Shaw was in sustaining the quality of his plays, all through a long run. He wrote to me in June of 1905:

"7th June, 1905.

"I was in front on Tuesday and noticed a point or two of importance to you.

"In the third act, when Malone, Ramsden and Tanner go off making a great cackle and fuss, do not begin the scene with Tavy until the noise is over and the audience's attention has quite come back to you. Just wait, looking provokingly at Tavy, until there is a dead silence and expectation and then say, without the least hurry: 'Won't you go with them, Tavy?' Otherwise you will not get the new key and the slow movement.

"At the end, when you say 'I want to make you cry for the last time' say it to Tavy alone. The others are not supposed to hear it: it is one of Ann's wicked asides.

"Don't forget to say 'But you nearly killed me, Jack, for all that' as if you meant it. He *has* nearly killed you. Mrs. Lyttleton, close behind me, explained to her party that Ann was only pretending to faint. That is not exactly true. Ann doesn't faint exactly, but she does collapse from utter exhaustion after her 'daring so frightfully.'

"It was one of the best performances I have seen you do.

"Why did you come on on your wrong side after the wait? If it occurs again, don't hurry: go round and come on with aggravating leisureliness.

"Yours ever,

"G. Bernard Shaw."

V

The Court did not confine itself to Bernard Shaw's plays. It drew John Galsworthy, John Masefield, Gilbert Murray, Laurence Housman, St. John Hankin, Maurice

Hewlett and Maurice Baring into its orbit. The company included Normal McKinnell, Dennis Eadie, Lewis Casson, Edmund Gwenn, Nigel Playfair, Dorothy Minto, Ellen O'Malley, Evelyn Weeden, Sarah Brooke and A. E. Matthews. There were times when great stars forsook their courses to play for us. Ellen Terry played in "Captain Brassbound's Conversion," and Mrs. Patrick Campbell in "Hedda Gabler."

In such seasons we looked elsewhere for work, and I was able to broaden my experience with other managers and producers.

During one of these interludes I was H. B. Irving's leading lady at the Shaftesbury. Of course my pulse quickened, for had he not been the idol of my teens, albeit he always wore the look of boredom with his worshipper that so many idols have.

But, alas, the play was but a thin affair, a melodrama, "The Jury of Fate." Irving's best effort in the play was reserved for us. He stalked upon the stage, glared at the empty benches and, in a hissed aside, set us all laughing "The Trial can't go on: the Jurymen have not arrived! Case dismissed." During another holiday from the Court Theatre I was produced by Arthur Bouchier in William J. Locke's first play "The Morals of Marcus." We nicknamed the author "Goldilocks," he was such a delightful boy of a man. Locke would sit in the stalls, wreathed in smiles, satisfied that everything we did was perfect, thereby showing that, though he might know much about human nature, he knew nothing about acting. For of all the muddles of this world none, not even those which politicians make, are half so muddlesome as is a rehearsal at the beginning of a play. But whilst ours generally came out all right on the night, theirs. . . .

"The Morals of Marcus" taught me something of Bouchier's method of production. They were noisy; he called out commands from the stalls, and did not bother about more discreet methods of correction—no little note flew, like a barbed arrow, from his hands to ours.

I had to have fine clothes for "The Morals of Marcus."

It was almost the first time I had worn smart clothes on the stage. They had generally been either classical or skimpy. I went to Violet Vanbrugh (Mrs. Bouchier), who then lived in Albany, for guidance. The clothes were from Worth; thanks to her and them I was an adventuress—grand in feathers and finery—for the first time in my life since callow, youthful days, when my innocence so wronged me that Wilson Barrett snatched the part of Berenice out of my mouth. There was yet another interval of absence from the Court when I acted under Dion Boucicault. By this time I thought I knew all there was to know about the ways and vagaries of producers. Boucicault undeceived me. He had a method of production which was all his own. With him, the cast became the pieces on a chessboard. You might be king or queen or bishop, but the moves you made were his. Some of us were too heavy to be lifted, and Boucicault, even if he had the power, was far too correct to attempt to lift even a pawn; but he took us all in hand in the literal sense of the term, leading each of us about the stage, planting us on our proper square. Whilst the moves went on, Boucicault used to make us copy his intonation of our lines which he recited in an unattractive, hammering voice. Yet, though to me the method was unbearable, there is no gainsaying the fact that there were others who found it as replete with comfort as a select boarding-house, or as one of those Swiss hotels where, after standing at attention, the warning bell sounds and the regiment of waitresses fires a volley of food at the assembled guests. Silence! except for the sound of mastication; and then another sally and all the plates are gone before your mouth is empty.

Boucicault knew precisely what he wanted and had found, perhaps by experience, that the way he could best get it was to reduce all and each of us to the state of automata so that we could the better dance to his piping. It was during the season when we played "Grace" and "The Barrier" that I met for the first time two of the

foremost actresses of that day: Marie Tempest and Irene Vanbrugh—twin queens of comedy.

Their acting was an illumination to me. It helped me to see clearly what I had only seen dimly before: that an actress has a dual part to play—her own part and also a part in giving unity to the play. Some actors put personal success before everything. They are lone stars. Their light is so bright that, though it dazzles the audience, it extinguishes that of lesser luminaries. They are well known, but in our time have become rarer and rarer. The ancient story, part of the well-worn repertory of theatrical stories, describes the type. Hamlet is to be played in Manchester. The manager asks Hamlet when he shall call the rehearsal. "No rehearsal," says the star. "Well, sir," asks the manager, "have you any message to give to the rest of the company?" "Yes, tell 'em to stand as far away from me as they can and to act as badly as they know how."

But artists like Irene Vanbrugh and Marie Tempest know how to act so as to combine personal triumph with helpfulness to all the players who are acting with them. That is not rare, but the way they do it is. For their helpfulness is given without any appearance of bestowing it. They hold the stage and hold the cast together without seeming to try to do either, and in so doing achieve a double triumph of technique and personality.

Ellen Terry, of course, possessed the power of taking command to an unrivalled degree, and never have I seen it better exerted than on an unforgettable occasion when, old and beginning to fail in memory, she made an appearance in Shakespeare's "Much Ado About Nothing." The play was being given by amateurs of talent, members of the Shakespeare Reading Society. Ellen forgot a line. That did not perturb her. She laughed her laugh of silver, took her cue and on she went, whilst everyone was better pleased than if the words had come all pat off her tongue. But it was no less in what she did than in what she said that her genius was revealed. Her personality welded the cast

into a whole. She gathered them together as though holding them in loving arms, and then I understood the splendour of that immortal comedian's boast: "I am not only witty in myself but the cause that wit is in other men."

There is also another who in these days in another way gave me great help; the poet Laurence Housman. He used to read his plays to me, and read them so beautifully that I learned that poetry is not printed word but a living voice, and that those who love poetry must go on and on trying to find occasions for the voice of poetry to be heard not now and then but every day. The world should have—like Mrs. Humphry Ward—a quiet hour when it can listen-in to poetry. It might have been hard in those days to make the voice of poetry heard, but now the wireless can do it, and already the British Broadcasting Corporation is beginning, albeit with excessive British caution, to render us this service.

With Laurence Housman wit is the bright flame of fierce conviction. Talent with him is a family trait, as well as a personal gift. His poetry has, like himself, much grace; but Laurence is a fighter. Of him it may with truth be said: "No man ever went out to make so many enemies and found so many friends." The Propagandist can't keep out even of his poetry.

Our enthusiasm for the cause of Votes for Women was another bond of union between us, and among my papers I treasure a worn leaflet containing the poem which he wrote on behalf of the Suffragettes.

"Look back upon the past, and read
Who were the women known to fame?
Not they who patient from the spool
Wove webs to deck them in their biers.
Not they who feared to drain, when full
Their country's cup of blood and tears;
But they who, kindling at her need,
Went forth like men through sword and flame
And proved them of the fighter's breed—

These are the women known to fame.
Not she, the fair domestic tool,
Who veiled her face and dulled her ears,
In latticed courts by fountains cool
With ditties sung to Dulcimers;
But she who dared the forward deed,
Who stood for right and feared no blame,
Who, breaking from force bonds, went free—
These are the women known to fame!”

Laurence Housman's ardent belief in the rights of women comes out even in the little letter which he wrote after staying with me in my home at Stansted in July 1910:

“My dear Lillah,

“I am still eating the provisions with which you provided me for my journey—the biscuits, I mean; the sandwiches I finished yesterday. Many thanks.

“I wish I could picture you still lying on your lawn of weeds, but I fear this rain prevents you.

“I feel a woman's side of things very strongly. As my sister says: ‘A man ought to go through the pangs of childbirth before he allows in his philosophy any abuse of women for avoiding it.’ Similarly, I say, a judge ought to go through a term of hard labour, of penal servitude, three strokes of the ‘cat’ and a partial hanging before being fit to pass any sentence. Who would be a judge on these terms, I wonder? And there is that wise nurse who said: ‘If Nature had arranged that husbands and wives should have children alternatively, there would never be more than *three* in a family.’”

CHAPTER VII

SHAW ON AND OFF THE STAGE

I

I SUPPOSE every actress who lives much of her life among artists must have opportunities of listening to the views expressed by real and other artists upon art. Every actress must also have listened to the artful voice which tells her that she would be a better actress if she were a less virtuous woman. This gross application of the creed which some artists profess is not worth talking about: it is too silly. Silly because every one who knows anything about life, who has lived it and read about it—be she actress or not—knows that the power to represent life does not depend on having lived all sorts of lives. It might just as well be said that an actor, to represent on the stage the staggering and stumbling of a drunken man, must needs himself—at least once in his life—have been the worse for liquor. It is as silly as the conscientious amateur actor who, about to appear as Othello, blacked himself all over the more thoroughly to represent the Moor.

But the creed which some artists are apt to preach and some fewer also to practise, seems at least worth mentioning. As I understand it, the creed amounts to this: that art is an empire in itself; the artist is a citizen of that empire or—more often—the emperor himself. He owes allegiance to no other laws. He must live for his art alone. In that empire, he maintains, the writ of moral law does not run. In all such matters art is a law unto itself.

When I began this chapter, which is to tell about

Shaw's play "The Doctor's Dilemma," I found that the play brought memories of these discussions back to me and so I asked a sensible man who takes an interest in art to tell me what he thought about the problem. He laughed. "Yes," he said, "some artists are like that and sometimes even good ones. Nell Gwynne was a naughty lady who was also a great woman; but Sarah Siddons could play Lady Macbeth whilst she was living a life of exemplary and dull domesticity. You can compare this evasion of moral sanctions with stepping off the gold standard. Sensible people don't step off unless they must, but when they do they don't abuse the gold. That," he said, "is one side of the story. The other also must be considered. The Puritan, so it is said, looked with disfavour upon art. He may be likened to a golfer—my friend plays golf and plays it very badly—a golfer who grips too tight with his right hand.

"The Scriptures tell us to hold fast to that which is good: they do not tell us to hold too fast. Remember what one of the wisest Englishmen once wrote—'not everyone is fit to testify to truth.' There is also a world of wisdom in that apparently cynical observation made by the bishop to the candidates for ordination 'preach the gospel with assiduity but above all without enthusiasm!'

"In short," he said, "extremes meet in stupidity, and both those people—he who having stepped off the gold standard gibes at gold and he who grips his moral club too strongly with his right hand—have met on all too common ground of muddle-headed thinking. They have both done untold ill to others and no good to themselves. Yet," he added, "what a wonderful theme for a drama!"

It was the very thought which I had in mind when I asked him for enlightenment. What a wonderful theme for a drama! Shaw discovered it in "The Doctor's Dilemma." It is the central idea of the play. A doctor obliged to decide which of two lives he shall save! Shall it be that of a tired, ineffectual but virtuous colleague?

Shall it be the life of a genius who is also a liar, a swindler and a thief? As Shaw originally planned it, Jennifer and the genius—her artist husband Dubedat—were to be the centre of interest in the play. But of course no sooner does Shaw begin to work upon the theme, no sooner has he brought the doctors to life than they—his creations—run away with him. The puppets rebel against the man who pulls the wires that move them. They won't be managed. The doctors run away with the author of their being and, as so often happens with unmanageable children, the offspring now manage the parent.

The triumph of the doctors was complete so soon as they had sprung to life in Shaw's fertile brain. Whilst still writing "The Doctor's Dilemma" Shaw nearly broke my heart by writing to me from Cornwall "Jennifer and Dubedat have taken a back seat," and that after he had told me that the play was being written specially for me! That I was to be the beautiful and interesting wife of an unstable artist—the most sympathetic part that any actress could wish to have! Any woman, whether she be actress or not, can imagine the state of my feelings when I got his letter:

"I am sorry to have to tell you that the Artist's wife is the sort of woman I hate; and you will have your work cut out for you in making her fascinating."

I wrote to tell him of my bitter disappointment, but my appeal was vain. Even the title of the play had to be changed. It was to have been called "Jennifer," but the doctors robbed the play even of its name and rechristened it with Shaw standing acquiescent at the font—"The Doctor's Dilemma."

Shaw wrote—thinking perhaps to soothe me—this long, charming and flattering letter:

"I have instructed Archer to announce that you will play the heroine of 'The Doctor's Dilemma.' It will

be a lucky play as this morning, coming up from the beach by a special act of Providence (to retrieve a book Charlotte had lost) I found in my path a most beautiful snake, two feet long, with an exquisite little head about the size of the tip of your little finger, and a perfect design in lozenges on its back. It stayed nearly two minutes (the first ten seconds of which were spent in hissing at me) and then went away, sometimes tumbling down a precipice two feet high into a heap of rings, sometimes gliding through the grass. It finally vanished into a bramble; but we parted the best of friends, and I am now convinced that 'Doctor's Dilemma' will be a complete success for you, for me, for the Court and for the universe.

"After all, the snake had not much of a part, but its figure produced an extraordinary poetic effect.

"However, the setting was good. It was a very fine day, and the sun was blazing on the creature's lozenges. It would not have produced any effect at all in the Brighton Aquarium. The moral is, that a salary is not everything. Although in view of the recent returns at the Court, I think you may want all you can get to save you from having to go on tour at thirty shillings a week, yet there is no golden rule as to taking big salaries and doing anything you are paid for; for it is no use making yourself dear in order to make yourself cheap. Whenever they make you an offer, say, show me the play. Miss Evelyn Millard did that years ago when they offered her an engagement at the Haymarket to play Gloria. They showed her the play and she said No. Now she was wrong to say No; but she was right to insist on seeing the book and to refuse the engagement, rather than let herself be seen to disadvantage (as she thought).

"I wish you would suggest a name for yourself in this new play. I cannot very well call the lady Lillah. Provisionally I have called her Andromeda; but Mrs. Andromeda Dubedat is too long. Here in King Arthur's country the name Guinevere survives as

Jennifer; but that does not hit it exactly either. I have used up such a lot of good names that I am driven back on the more artificial ones.

"It is not clear what is going to happen to John Bull and the Superman. They may be exhausted. Six matinées of a new play may be needed to freshen the boom and avert ruin. For Heaven's sake do not sign for the run of anything until we have very carefully considered the situation. I am writing at the rate of an act a week, and I know exactly what is coming; there is no abyss to be filled up as in Barbara. It is just screaming, every line of it.

"V. has, I presume, told you about the dresses. They can be done for the £100, I think, on *your* back. On anybody else's, £800.

"Yours ever,

"G. B. S."

For all I know these letters may be useful some day to anyone who tries to make a serious study of Shaw the Dramatist. They may perhaps reveal the struggle which went on in his mind when he was writing the play. It seems to me like an attack by highway robbers on a well-intentioned citizen. He sets forth with all the wealth of a great idea in his pocket. Something attracts his eye—a decoy—he strays from his path, and the robbers are upon him. Too stout-hearted to yield up all that is in his purse, he does a deal with them. Promises them a prominent place in his new play. They take it and . . . Jennifer has to take a back seat.

I had come by this time to know Bernard Shaw and his wife as friends away from the theatre and the rigours of his endless rehearsals. One week-end—I think it was the last before "The Doctor's Dilemma" was produced—I went to stay with them in their house at Welwyn, in Hertfordshire. I was playing at the Court, so I did not arrive at the house until after midnight. All had gone to bed. There was a note waiting for me:

Instructions have been given that you are not to be disturbed in the morning until you ring.

Church can be taken in bed if desired.

* * * * *

As there is not oil enough in the lamp to last, I am putting them out and lighting the candles.

If you want anything, reach freely for it. If that fails, shout until somebody wakes and attends to you.

Goodnight - goo-oo-oo-d night - goo-oo-oo-oo - d night de de de de.

AUTOGRAPH LETTER BY BERNARD SHAW

"Bedtime, 17/11/06.

"Instructions have been given that you are not to be disturbed in the morning until you ring.

"Lunch can be taken in bed if desired.

"As there is not oil enough in the lamps to last, I am putting them out and lighting the candles.

"If you want anything, search freely for it. If that fails, shout until somebody wakes and attends you.

"Good-night. Goo-oo-oo-d night. Goo-oo-oo-oo-d-night, etc., etc., etc., etc.

On the following morning—a Sunday—I had the opportunity of seeing something of his ways of amusing himself. Shaw spent most of his time in the dark room developing photographs. In between whiles he would play his Bechstein with a pianola. Music was much more to Shaw than literature. He always declared that his master in drama was Mozart; but he wallowed in Wagner and evidently thought much more of Verdi than most Wagnerians did.

"The Doctor's Dilemma" was a success, and my name was praised in high places. But when the next Shaw play was announced, "The Philanderer," I was ill and could not act for a few months. In the meantime, Shaw had arranged for the production of "The Dark Lady of the Sonnets." I was furious at the notion that anybody else should play Elizabeth, and wrote to tell him so. His reply was brief: "Delighted to hear that you are furious. It is a sign of returning vigour." When I gently asked for an introduction to another manager, Charles Frohman, who happened to be in London at the time, Shaw replied: "Why should I introduce you to Frohman? We should probably never see you again. Let him come after you if he wants you." Frohman did come after me, but that was two years later. He offered me a contract on generous terms if I would let him "star" me through America; but have I not said the Court had got rid of "stars"? I refused; and so wealth beyond the dreams of

avarice never came my way. I went on wearing the "twelve pound look" of the Court Theatre.

Years afterwards, when I was acting in "The Wandering Jew," David Belasco, who acquired the American rights of the play and produced it at the Knickerbocker Theatre in New York, made me a yet more magnificent offer, by cable too. I was to wander through America—farther than the Jew ever wandered—and receive more money for each single performance than I had ever earned in a month in England. I was sorely tempted to accept the offer: tempted to revisit the United States where enthusiasm for acting is so great and appreciation so sincere.

I needed the money badly, but I needed peace more. America could in those days give plenty, but only England could give peace. I remained in England and she gave me the gift I asked.

One great difference between the old theatre and the new lay in the importance which the new method of production attached to each and every character in a play. In the Wilson Barrett plays, the plot merely had to prove the irreproachable virtue of the virtuous and the irredeemable villainy of the wicked. There were no half shades of virtue or of villainy. Characters were all good or all evil. Shaw, on the other hand, sees life as a variegated pattern, of light and shade: of good and evil. A man may be a burglar from ten to twelve daily, but for the rest of the twenty-four hours he is a kind father, a devoted husband, and a first rate fiddler. The flippant might say that Shaw is concerned with words rather than deeds; but the flippant always prefer chaff to grain. Shaw deals not with deeds but with motives, and because motives are always—or almost always—mixed, his plays serve up none of that glowing satisfaction which is felt when virtue, sprinting up the straight, beats the villain by a short head.

Shaw does not want to make people contented. He wants to make them discontented; and he succeeds. He does not satisfy: he stimulates. "Why, I have seen

people stagger out of the Court Theatre after seeing one of my plays," he said to Archibald Henderson, "unspeakably indignant with me because I made them think, had stirred them to opposition, and had made them heartily ashamed of themselves."

II

It seems to me that his plays provide justification for much that is apparently contradictory in Shaw. A citizen of the world goes to one of them: everything in it is so subversive of what he believes and is sure he ought to think, that he says, "Why! the man is an anarchist—a destroyer. He makes good people bad and bad people good! Immoral fellow!" But if the citizen looks closer he discovers the moralist behind the apparent anarchist; finds Shaw as fierce and implacable as any prophet and, like many another, quite prepared to destroy all rival moralities to make his own morality king. Hearken unto the voice of Shaw:

"I am as fond of fine music and handsome buildings as Milton was, or Cromwell, or Bunyan; but if I found that they were becoming the instruments of a systematic idolatry of sensuousness, I would hold it good statesmanship to blow every cathedral in the world to pieces with dynamite, organ and all, without the least heed to the screams of the art critics and cultured voluptuaries."

But these questions of morals apart, Shaw has done more than anyone to rescue the theatre from "theatricality" and he has done it because he is a realist; one who will not avert his face from truth even though tradition and art bid him look the other way.

The old tricks of production never count with him. He snatches his characters, his way of dressing them, his conception of their movements, from the streets, from anywhere, from people he actually knows. Here is an instance. We were preparing for the death scene in

"The Doctor's Dilemma." When Dubedat, the artist, dies, Jennifer, his wife, goes from the room whilst the doctors bend over him. She returns, not in black and sombre clothes, but in a lovely flaming gown and a jewelled head-dress. London is shocked.

But Dubedat, poor spineless genius, had stared over the edge of physical life and, almost with his dying breath, he had recited his creed:

"I believe in Michael Angelo, Velasquez and Rembrandt; in the might of design, the mystery of colour, the redemption of all things by Beauty everlasting. . . ."

It was not a creed that could be served by a widow draped in mourning. I must return to the body of my husband in gorgeous raiment.

The designing of the head-dress fired Shaw's imagination. One day, during rehearsals, he said: "There is one woman in London who can give you the idea—Judith Lytton [now Lady Wentworth]—go and see her." Judith Lytton was an astonishing and picturesque figure. She had married Neville Lytton, the artist, the brother of Lord Lytton. Neville was to design the head-dress. I had already seen Judith Lytton once, riding through the Forest of Worth, upon an Arab horse. She rode as the Arabs ride, with her body limp and obedient to her mount. She used to ride along the paths of the forest, with her wild red hair piled high upon her head, wearing a simple blue linen smock, with bare legs and red sandals. Shaw wanted me to see Judith Lytton's wonderful hair. She used to wear it strung with jewels. I went to her in London and, for my instruction and delight, she piled her hair high upon her head and strung it with bands of sapphires, rubies and pearls. Her eyes were blue, and her pale face accentuated her brilliant colouring. She had a bizarre beauty which delighted me. I went back to the theatre and, with my suggestions and Shaw's invention, Neville Lytton made the head-dress which so shocked the first night audience. Custom, the

shopkeeper of decorous behaviour, prescribed black, but Custom had never had Dubedat to serve. That wayward genius had converted me to his creed: to believe in "the mystery of colour; the redemption of all things by Beauty everlasting." I testified to my belief.

III

I have often been asked by people who admire or who dislike Shaw to give them a picture of Bernard Shaw at home. The admirers are pleased and the hostile disappointed to see what a charming picture it is. It began to paint itself in my mind during the fine week-ends of 1906 when I used to stay with Mr. and Mrs. Shaw at Ayot. They were week-ends of rest and quiet. Shaw would run round the garden in the morning, doing his breathing exercises the while. After breakfast we would walk, and sometimes we would carry on our conversation with quotations from Shakespeare or Dickens. His memory was amazing and mine was not so ill, so we enjoyed ourselves and fed a harmless vanity at the same time. In the afternoon, he would play his pianola or read a book. There were no hectic discussions and no displays of cleverness. Sometimes there might be leisurely talks about our friends, the Sidney Webbs, of the work of the Fabian Society, or of the vagaries of the new member, H. G. Wells.

Shaw's discipline of life does not permit his quiet to be disturbed. With him work comes before pleasure, grimly. In the very early days there was a spell during which I was not invited to Welwyn, and the explanation came in a letter from Charlotte Shaw:

"Do not be uneasy. . . . You have noticed that I have not asked you for week-ends. . . . G.B.S. has been really badly overworked this winter, so that I have to keep the week-ends as quiet as possible. . . . You are such a wonderful and unsettling apparition that you upset the whole establishment when you

descend upon it! So I have to indulge in you sparingly until we are all used to you, or until you are older and plainer. . . .”

One week-end I said to Shaw: “Where and how do you take your holidays?” He almost leapt at me as he answered: “Holidays, woman! I never took one in my life.”

I felt as if I had suggested an unmentionable sin; but the holidays came. In those days as now, “The Beetle and Wedge” at Moultsford was amusing and pleasant, and we used to stay there for week-ends and spend much time on the river. Shaw as an oarsman was not conspicuous for style. I had been trained by a diamond sculls man, and had learned to feather my oars; but Shaw had no use for feathers. Speed is everything he said; style does not matter. He would make rapid strokes and show me how powerful he was. But I also was clever. I used to row downstream and leave him to the hard work of rowing home again upstream. I watched him maliciously, straining and panting, and do not believe that he ever noticed my ruse.

Shaw is the best companion in the world. He has not forgotten how to play, he loves foolishness, and never forces conversation when he is alone with his friends. One summer found us at Tor Cross, in Devonshire. Lady Bonham Carter, then Violet Asquith, was of the party. We used to bathe before breakfast and do our exercises on the beach wearing the lightest of bathing costumes.

After breakfast, we would spread ourselves upon Violet Asquith’s sumptuous blue rug. One morning, we sat thus, our backs to the sea, with the sunshine scorching down upon us. Violet Asquith was prone upon the rug with a book. I also was reading or dreaming. G.B.S., of course, was working: reading one of his manuscripts. We forgot that the sea has tides. Suddenly we were reminded by being thrown upon our faces by a wave, and what a helter-skelter! I, laughing at Shaw

grabbing in the water for his manuscript, and Violet Asquith grabbing for her floating rug.

Shaw is a very strong swimmer. I am not. Many times he would give me lessons. When he is teaching some exercises or art, away from the theatre, he is both patient and kind. He would tell me to put one hand upon his shoulder and just swim, on and on. We would find ourselves well out to sea. Then a change would come over Shaw, a sea change. He is vigorous on land but when he is swimming in the sea, he becomes for once tranquil. He would say to me as we swam: "We are in another world." If I were afraid when I saw the land slipping farther and farther away, he would say: "Have no fear, Lillah, gently and slowly does it."

He is strong enough to respect fear and gentle enough to be kind to the fearful. Shaw is a chivalrous man; but you must not tell him so.

He has undoubtedly spent a great deal of energy struggling against his natural tenderness. "I pride myself upon thinking clearly, not feeling deeply," he says—quite fiercely; but his friends only believe half he says; the better half. I prophesy that the last play he writes will be a great emotional play. In it those spiritual forces which have come to him through his long and brave search for truth will find voice at last.

Shaw may laugh at my suggestion, but he will make it true. That play will contain the missing articles of a creed of which the first only are given in "The Doctor's Dilemma" :

"I believe in Michael Angelo, Velasquez and Rembrandt; in the might of design, the mystery of colour, the redemption of all things by Beauty everlasting and the message of art that has made these hands blessed."

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CHAPTER VIII

MASEFIELD—NAN—THE WITCH

I

DESMOND MACCARTHY, in telling the story of the Court Theatre, quotes with punning aptness "As You Like It":

"Touchstone: Wast ever at the Court, shepherd?

"Corin: No, truly.

"Touchstone: Then thou art damned."

By this token there were many in London that were damned during the years that Shaw, Galsworthy, Housman and other playwrights were being produced at the Court Theatre; for they were never at the Court.

Nevertheless, the experiment gradually exerted influence on theatre-goers, and the influence slowly spread. The theatres of London were reinvigorated, acting was stimulated, and the stage relieved of many affectations by the example of the work done at the Court Theatre.

The management of the theatre fought against the star system. The day of the splendid actor manager—a gorgeous and romantic figure—was passing. The producer expended as much effort upon the playing of a small part as upon a big one. Desmond MacCarthy wrote:

"At the Court, the acting pleased from the first. People began to say that the English could act after all, and that London must be full of intelligent actors of whom nobody has ever heard."

He adds the acute comment, "Yet, strange to say, these actors, when they appeared in other plays, on other boards, seemed to sink again to normal insignificance."

It is true. Whilst other producers were aiming at effect, truth was the effect at which the Court Theatre aimed. Under more easy-going ways of production every actor might fill as much of the stage canvas as he could. He might paint his portrait vastly over life-size. At the Court we might all be as large as life: no larger. In the one case a shower of meteors; in the other the members of a constellation each with its proper orbit! No one of us was allowed to act away from the rest of the company, nor away from the play as a complete pattern. The author plans—he is the architect. The producer is the master builder and the actors are the craftsmen.

Nevertheless the craftsmen—the actors and actresses at the Court—felt no constraint. On the contrary, we enjoyed a larger freedom; for author and producer alike encouraged the actor to let himself go; for the effect aimed at was Wagnerian: broad and free.

Desmond MacCarthy is right when he says that there was a loss of power when we went to other theatres and acted under other producers. There were inspiration, originality and discipline in the Court productions. When we went elsewhere, the part was everything; but at the Court, the whole was greater than the part! Any of us would cheerfully take a small role, for we knew that even so we should not have to be subservient, negative and obsequious to the stars—for, as I have said, there were no stars. We were members of a theatrical House of Lords: all equal and all lords. Edmund Gwenn was Baines, the butler, in the "Return of the Prodigal." Only a few weeks before, he had played a great part—that of the immortal Enery Straker, chauffeur and philosopher, in "Man and Superman." But as the butler, in a lesser part with little to say, he was allowed so much space that his

performance was as vivid as it had been in the bigger part of Enery Straker.

The producer swept the stage clear of costly properties and gorgeous scenery. In the old order, the acting was often thwarted by the scenic effects. In the new order, we were taught that the play's the thing: and it was.

At the end of 1907, a move was made from the Court to the Savoy Theatre. The Court had seen the production of eleven of Shaw's plays which had run for seven hundred performances.

Euripides came next with three plays and forty-eight performances. To-day (1932) as I write these lines news reached me that we are to play Euripides' "Iphigenia" in London in December for one performance!

The first play in the Savoy Theatre was Shaw's "Arms and the Man," in which I created the part of Raina! What shall I say of Raina? What I thought then, or what I think now? If these pages are to show my life as an actress as it is, not as a sequence of successes but as a striving to achieve something: a ceaseless change; now going forward and now back, but in sum progressing—in short, the evolution of a living person whose profession is acting, then I must say both; both what I thought at the time and what I think now. For this was a moment of my life when something important happened to me; when, as may happily be the case in life, failure taught me far more than success would ever have done. Not that I failed in Raina. I was too experienced an actress to do that. People who saw it and who do not flatter have told me that they liked me in the part. Nevertheless this play will always bring memories of failure back to me; memories of the insecure certainty of youth and of the hard and wholesome way along which youth travels to attain maturity. Here is Raina: an insincere and shallow Bulgarian girl, lying and pretending her way through life solely for the satisfaction of her imagination. Here

am I: already passed through three of Shakespeare's seven stages—infancy—childhood—youth, and on the threshold of the fourth—the soldier-workman stage. How could the intense little girl of the Cheltenham days, brought up on Blake and Milton, understand Raina?

How could an erstwhile queen of the baroque drama understand Raina?

How could Ann Whitefield—intent on banging her brand new tambourine—have sympathy with or understand the lying jade?

They could not: they were far too serious. So was I. Raina, the little liar, came into my life rather too soon for me as an actress, but none too soon for me as a woman.

The result was that Shaw and I came nearer to disagreement over Raina than ever we had done before or have done since. Every woman will understand me when I declare it was all his fault. Of course it was. He took too much for granted. He scolded when he ought to have laughed me out of my bad stage behaviour. He began all wrong: was gentle and patient when he ought to have seen that I didn't know what he was talking about. Shaw wrote:

"The part makes such enormous demands on your presence of mind that I feel quite apologetic about it. The transitions are very sudden, and come one after the other with fearful rapidity. But, on the other hand, when once they become mechanical, their effect is certain. To get the maximum of effect you must feed Bluntschli very carefully. Your high horse will not amuse the audience unless he knocks you off it; and you must take care to caracole very proudly indeed every time a fall is coming. However, these are only counsels of perfection. You must now let yourself go and enjoy yourself; even if you miss a few points, you have enough in hand for a handsome success. So go in and win."

Next he became a man of wrath, exclaiming:

“Raina has gone to bits. You play the part unstilted all through and the effect is disastrous. Robert Loraine [with whom I had most of the scenes] is acting you off the stage.”

And then he was the sorrowing school-teacher, rapping me over the head with his thimble like the old lady of Cheltenham, and telling me what a good boy does! This is his letter. The good boy is Robert Loraine:

“ . . . he has found out how to drive the play through without you. Since you will not let him get his effects by walking over him, and making the anticlimax possible, he gets them by walking over you. If he didn’t, there would be no effect at all; and, as it is, a great deal is lost, and what is saved goes altogether to his credit. This is really very bad of you, as there is nothing to prevent you from doing as you did on the first night, when you were very fine. What is wrong is that you do not hold your part against him. You take his tone; you take his speed; and you are so discouraged by the failure of the effects to come off that you plunge on harder than ever and make things worse. Raina is never in a hurry, never frightened after her first pop into bed after the shots*; always disdainful, patronising, superior, queening it until her collapse. Until then, it never occurs to her for a moment to doubt her enormous moral superiority to Bluntschli, or Sergius’ superiority. She likes him as she would like a pet dog. Her exclamation, ‘Oh, it is useless to make YOU understand,’ has no sense, no effect unless she has been on her high horse all through. Well, you have got down off the high horse. You have become Bluntschli’s little pet, and Petkoff’s little darling, and Katerine’s naughty little girl;

* The first act is in Raina’s bedroom during the retreat of the Serbian army through the town.

and the audience see what is meant only by a strained attention to the author's words and are confused and disappointed because what they had read does not come over the footlights except when Loraine is driving it over. You never pay the slightest attention to him: and when he looks at you, and finds you dreaming about something else—when you give him his cue in his own tone and ruin his reply—his jaw sets visibly in despair and he becomes a man of iron. If I were he, I would give a yell of rage, seize you by the ankles and swing you round my head and let you fly into the pit, and rush screaming from the theatre.

"What Raina wants is the extremity of style—style Comédie Française, Queen of Spain style. Do you hear, worthless wretch that you are? STYLE.

"Your abandonment of the part is mere want of interest in it and susceptibility to what is suggested to you at the moment by what is going on on the stage. A shot excites you, Loraine's voice hurries you, Raina's comedy amuses you, and immediately off you go miles away from the character—the sport of every accident and impression—and the receipts go down to £59.

"Oh, give me that nice good Auriol Lee, who gets her teeth into her part and holds on, biting deeper and holding tighter every night.

"Thank heaven it is the post hour and I shall get this sent off before there is time to relent or flatter or give way to my wretched weakness of character.

"Demon—demon—demon!

"G. B. S."

That was too much: no doubt because it was too true. Intense Cheltenham girl, baroque Queen and Ann Whitefield, all rose up in me and putting their indignant heads together made me write back.

Here is my letter:

"Why wait till your anger has simmered down . . .? You seem to have missed the point. Couldn't you see that my suddenly slacking off like that wakened the company with a start and for the first time they *acted*."

"For five weeks I have entirely carried the whole play. If I had acted as I did on Monday night 'Arms and the Man' would not have run a week. Now you know what the play can drop to without my work. However, this sudden awakening has done the company a good deal of good, and all this week I have had something to play against."

How proud of my letter I was then! How little it pleases me now.

I knew that Shaw was too good an artist to be mistaken, and so I had to confess to myself that I must be in the wrong. That was a good beginning. But where was I wrong? I read my letter again and began to laugh. That was better still. I laughed because it made me see that if Raina could not ride the high horse on the stage well enough to satisfy Shaw, I, my private self, had been riding it as to the manner born in my letter. The laughter brought me wisdom, sweet and bitter. Bitter because I saw how stupid I had been; sweet because at last I realised why I had been so stupid. It was because, although I thought I knew all about it, although I had played in all sorts of plays, I had never truly known what Comedy is.

II

And then, as in a vision, taking off her mask, Comedy revealed herself. I saw her dividing the empire of men's hearts on equal terms with Tragedy. Comedy wears—as Joseph wore—a coat of many colours and, like Joseph, sets people free from bondage: the bondage of the workaday world. She warms the heart like a child nestling in the bosom. I forgot that intense little

Cheltenham girl, forgot the stage crowns I had worn, even forgot Ann Whitefield. I saw "Arms and the Man" as it is—a comedy extravaganza. The artist in me had learned at last the hardest task of all that falls to actors: to play in Comedy.

One of the plays produced at the Court was John Masfield's "The Campden Wonder," a forceful but gloomy piece which brought him into the public eye. The critics and the public began to pay attention to him. I had seen both Mr. and Mrs. Masfield many times during the rehearsals at the Court, but I had already met John many years before when I was a child of eleven or thereabouts.

He has long since forgotten the occasion: forgotten it so completely as to be sure it never happened. So sure is he that, when I told the story lately in his presence, he exclaimed: "It is not true," but true it is. I see the scene as clearly as on the evening in late summer when it happened. A group of children playing in an orchard at Ledbury under apple trees with boughs hanging low with ripe fruit. As we play, I spy a little boy standing apart in the shadow of a tree; his hair is in a fringe over his eyes, and he shrinks back against the tree when we ask him to play with us. I go nearer and ask him again, but he will not. "Then climb up and throw us down some apples." He neither speaks nor moves. I climb up and throw down the rosy apples. He remains aloof. I come down—a little innocent Eve—and give him one. He takes it, but little Adam will not eat.

The first time I told the story to Masfield he forgot, in his indignation, to deny it. "Oh, Lillah," he said, "I was not a bashful boy. I was a bold dare-devil." If the child is father to the man, he certainly was both.

Some faces are curtains which conceal men's minds, some are mirrors which reflect them. John Masfield's face is a mirror in which his moods are seen as they chase one another through his mind. They are like sunshine and cloud playing hide-and-seek with one

another on an April day. There are no clouds. The sun is bright. Swiftly they gather and sweep over the sun, and all things lie in shadow.

It was the dare-devil sunny mood that made John Masefield write to me of his desire, after he had seen "Nan" on the stage, "to begin a swirling serpent-woman play with a last act clanging like copper pans"; and "you in the chief part." Oh, John! why give me hope so high and then defer its fulfilment so long? "A swirling serpent-woman." Could author speak actress fairer? A self-contained Eve and a climax so fulgent: the world would be well lost for such a part. But shyness clouded over the face of the sun, paling its creative power. The swirling serpent-woman tarries, devastating the kingdom of the unborn. She may yet be born. For he who created "Nan" could, as no one else of his generation might, create the great drama for which the theatre waits: drama of great passion, intense, sustained—good and evil. Only the dare-devil John can create those dramas for which the world has waited ever since Macbeth began "to grow weary of the sun."

What visions have poets seen which they have never told? Yet perhaps they do tell them—though not in words. How else to understand why it is that men like Hardy, Masefield and Barrie appear to those who know them greater even than their works?

They are transfigured by the vision. They irradiate us with its light. It must be so. I have sat with Barrie night after night in his flat high up over the Thames by Adelphi Terrace. He sits tucked up in his chair, puffing at his pipe, absorbed, silent. Now he stirs a little as though about to speak; but does not. Yet a great peace broods over this communion of silence. Now perhaps a word or two: sentences as short as in his plays—consummate master of compression that he is—a kind word, a whimsical word, never once in all the years we have sat and kept silence together has Barrie uttered an unworthy or an unkind thought. Only poets know such reticence. Barrie can talk and talk

well when he likes ; he can encourage by what he says, but most by that strange gift he has—not of telling you but of making you feel his sympathy. Silence with Barrie is no empty silence. It is eloquent. He can be silent in many languages. His silence can freeze, but it can also thaw the heart which is numb. Wizard of words, no doubt, but owner of that more occult wizardry—expressive silence.

Now I come to think of it, the good Samaritan never said a word to the man he succoured.

Yet silence is by no means always golden. It was from no malicious wish to see the effect of one's silence on the other's shyness that I arranged one evening a meeting between Barrie and Masfield. We went to Barrie's flat after my work at the theatre was over. I introduce Masfield. They exchanged a word or two. Silence. Another word or two: another silence: the rest was silence. Good-will and mutual regard were there; but it was just like that. . . . I must scream or run away. I ran; we all ran and trailed home along Adelphi Terrace without ever a word.

I was ill after the season of "Arms and the Man" and had gone to Cornwall for a rest. While I was there a letter came from John Masfield, in which he said that he was glad I was well again. ". . . the illness of an artist," he wrote, "means so much to so many . . . it is the taking away of a part of the beauty of life."

He added, at the end of his letter, "I only hope that my new play may be good enough to produce and that I may have the privilege of seeing you play the heroine."

The play was "The Tragedy of Nan," to me the most beautiful, simple and sincere of all John Masfield's works. As the play progressed, I met Masfield again and again. I was proud to give him an idea for an incident in the third act, an idea which grew out of a grim experience of my own childhood. At Ledbury, where I had first seen John Masfield as a boy, I had an old female cousin, who was a terror to us children. I hated staying in her house. She was hard, mean and avaricious.

All evil of temper and of spirit emanated from her. Darkness was full of her. Ugliness recalled her to me. She was childless, and she was cruel to us children when we went to stay with her. She kept many cows, but would allow us only the skim milk for our tea or porridge. The cream was made into butter and sent to market. My uncle, as we called him, used to drink his strong black tea without milk rather than dilute it with the skimmed milk which she allowed us. She fed us on heavy suet puddings.

I hated her skinflint ways and thought of a plan to pay her out. It was shearing time and I had been watching the shearers working in the shed. I loved the scene: the sweating shearers, the cascades of wool falling from their blades. I ran back to the house from the shearing-shed and said to my cousin, "Uncle is bringing back the shearers to dinner." Devilry made me say it, for it was not true. My cousin sent for the cook, whose name was Abiah, a docile, obedient woman. "The men are coming to dinner," my cousin told her. "Bring in that sheep that died last week. We'll cook that."

"What, not the ovey sheep, Mum?" answered the cook.

My cousin was livid. "Yes, the ovey sheep," she answered, "get it and cook some of it."

After an hour her husband returned to the house alone. I was terrified, for I had feared some dreadful end to my game. "Where are the men?" asked my cousin.

"They are having dinner in the shed," answered her husband. My cousin turned upon me. "You shall eat that ovey sheep yourself," she said, "and you will touch no other food in my house."

She brought in a piece of the horrible meat and held it in front of me. I forced myself out of her grasp and refused to touch it. The grip of her hands made me feel sick. Hours passed and I became faint with hunger. Still she insisted in her hideous threat. In the end, I was

sent home to my mother sick and piteous with fever and quinsey.

I told the story to John Masefield while he was writing "The Tragedy of Nan" and he used it in the scene where Nan turns her passionate anger upon Jenny ". . . my little Judas friend, my little pale snake friend. . . . Sit down, my little friend. Sit down and eat that pie yourself. . . . Eat it or I'll kill you. . . ."

"Nan" has all the simple stark tragedy of a Greek drama. But tragedy is uncertain in its appeal to a London audience . . . at least it did not appeal to them in 1908. I took the play from manager to manager, facing nothing but discouragement. At last I persuaded the "Pioneers" to put it on for a Sunday night performance.

A letter gives a picture of the country from which Nan came. I had asked him for details of the story, and the life from which he had drawn the character, and John answered:

"Her original home was in Broadway, in a cottage now destroyed. You will find the cottage described in one of William Morris's essays in 'Hopes and Fears for Art.' It was a very lovely little house, with some exquisite carving on the lintel of the door: a grey stone Cotswold house with the well-weathered stone slates on the roof. I saw it ten years ago a little while before it was pulled down. It stood at the upper end of the village, the last house on the right, just where the road swings round to go up the hill towards the Fish Inn and Chipping Campden.

"Her home with the Pargetters was at Broad Oak on Severn, a tiny hamlet between Westbury and Newnham, on the very brink of the river, in the middle of its great curve. The house does not exist in reality, I built it for myself, rather farther down the river bank than the little row of cottages but still well away from the coach road. Just below it, there is a good place from which to see the awful sight of the tide.

"Nan herself is a blend of two country types known

to me, one a very charming and beautiful kind of character which always makes me think of the simple and gentle women's heads by Holbein, the other a coarser, more powerful, but rather sullen type, such as you may have met in Herefordshire. Some of Millet's women have the look. There is something uncanny about it.

"If you wish to go to Broad Oak, there is a good hotel at Newnham, opposite the church. I forget its name: but 'opposite the church' is direction enough. Be sure you go at full moon when the tide is high. They will always be able to tell you when the tide's coming.*

"I hope that I may live to see you play Nan; but if I don't (for the play, I fear, has caused you many disappointments) I should like to thank you for all the trouble you have taken over it, and for the great encouragement you have given to me.

"I wish I were an artist, that I could paint you portraits of all the Pargetter household."

Somewhere else I have spoken of the intensity of tragedy with which John Masefield ends the play. I used to run off the stage in an ecstasy of pain and excitement. One night, just as I arrived in my dressing-room, the manager, A. E. Drinkwater, the father of John Drinkwater the poet, followed at my heels and said, "Mr. Thomas Hardy would like to see you."

I was breathless, but not more so than Thomas Hardy when he appeared at the door, shaking. He did not pause; he came in and said: "You must play my Tessy, you *must* play my Tessy. I shall send you the play I have made from my book; and you *will* play my Tessy, won't you?"

People who knew Hardy used to say that he never recovered from the cruel criticism meted out to "Jude the Obscure." When I met him Hardy was old, with

* In the last scene of the play Nan rushes from the house and drowns herself in the incoming tide.

honour and deference in attendance upon him. It was odd to see him thus, and to remember that when "Jude the Obscure" was published the critics had lashed him for a rude and demoralising fellow. In turning over my letters I have come upon one which tells of the sharpness of the pain the lashes caused him. Mrs. Crackenthorpe wrote to me a little time after my meeting with Mr. Hardy:

"He is keen, keen on the theatre, and everything connected with it" (she wrote). "I believe the secret wish of his heart is to see scenes from 'The Dynasts' staged before he 'passes on.' But *that's* not what I wanted to tell you! This is it. He has got, actually finished, ready, *his own dramatised version of Tess*. (Not the American version, which is still being played all over the States, he told me but his own.) He has promised to send me this, his own *Drama of Tess*, as quick as he can. *More*. He is quite ready to dramatise 'Jude the Obscure,' which I hold to be quite his finest *novel*, though 'The Dynasts' is, as I see it, quite the biggest thing he has ever done. . . . Wouldn't that be splendid? You see, he is very keen about 'Jude the Obscure,' because the critics crucified him about it, and he has never in truth quite recovered. He would therefore have a special joy in making a drama of it and *ramming it down* after these long years. Twenty years nearly it must be."

I never played Tess nor in "Jude the Obscure"; but in later years, when London was caught up in the first excitements and passions of the war, we produced the English scenes from Hardy's "Dynasts" at the Kingsway. It was a splendid failure. The play is a tale of the heroes of 1814, and London was too grimly aware of the war of 1914 to come and see us. On the first night of "The Dynasts" beloved Thomas Hardy hurried out of the theatre before the curtain went up. He would not stay for the ordeal of the first night, so he went home to Dorset

and waited anxiously for the news which was sent to him next day. It brought him no comfort.

I have been told that there are rare metals which, if traces of one of them are mixed with iron in the furnace, make steel rustless and more enduring, and it may be that some grains of this magic stuff getting mixed up with their common clay give poets endurance too: endurance which makes them go on working in spite of the rough usage of the world.

Hardy forsook the novel, but he found in the short poem a way to a new greatness. He made it a perfect medium for his art; to declare the tragedy of the world dispassionately, without complaint or indignation: a stoic. His poems are not plaintive, yet they haunt the ear like Scottish ballads.

I saw Hardy many times after the meeting in my dressing-room. I see him still, though he is gone; slight, neatly dressed, of upright carriage, alert, with something in his eye of the retired sea-captain—direct in speech—utterly objective in speaking of his work. He went on growing all his life. And when he was very old he seemed to be still more interested in life than he was when I first met him. Until he grew old he may have nourished a grievance against life. If so, in the end he triumphed and the grievance died. His later lyrical poems show that his mind knew no pettiness; only the good and the great endure with him. "I now tell the story of a novel in verse of twenty lines," he said to me on the last occasion when we met, a few weeks before he died.

Ah, that meeting! The happiness of it! He spoke of his life; his early days in London in an office in the Adelphi. "Your Adelphi," he said. He laughed to remember the fiddle which they used to play in office hours. We sat in the parlour which his presence made a palace, and only the softness of his voice told us that he was old. That and the acquiescence in life as one who says with reverence and humility, "Thy will be done." No elation, no despondency! "Along the cool, seques-

tered vale of life he kept the even tenor of his way." I asked whether the scene overlooking the University in "Jude the Obscure" was drawn from the sight of Oxford from Boar's Hill: a scene I often look on, and never without recalling Jude. "No," he said, "it was my own hill and the lights that Jude saw were mine too."

I told him that I was staying in Lulworth Castle with Weld Blundell, and asked him if he knew it. "No," he said; "they have not asked me." I told my host when I returned and he said, "No; I never dared to ask him." So I made them meet. Mr. and Mrs. Hardy came: he very quiet, not speaking much; yet when he left, one who had never met him exclaimed: "Why, he is even greater than his books." So strange is it that greatness is something in itself: the high quality of personality. It needs no words in which to express itself, and yet can touch the hearts of all who come within its range. Hardy was eager for me to say his poetry; wrote me letters telling me the pieces he thought best. "They will not find me harsh when you speak my poems. They are not harsh, only inevitable." But before we had chosen place and time—he would come, of course he would—he died. . . .

To Robert Lynd I owe my deepest gratitude for saying in a word what I have tried to say with so many words. He has given us an Anthology of Modern English Verse which proves the truth of the words of Matthew Arnold which he quotes: "By nothing is England so glorious as by her poetry," and with a noble gesture which youth alone has the graciousness to make Robert Lynd has dedicated his Anthology to "Thomas Hardy, O.M., Greatest of the Moderns."

Hardy admired the tragedy in Masfield's "Nan," the play I so wanted to make successful. I gave my best to it, and have Masfield's dear letter as a memento of my efforts and of his kindness. It was written after the first performance of "Nan" by the Pioneers.

"My dear Nan,

"You were very beautiful and wonderful on Sunday.

It was a great honour to have my words so played and spoken. It was wonderful to see you giving my poor country girl all that intense and moving beauty. You brought her into touch with so many emotions and ideas which I had not suspected in her. You were all that I was trying for and could not reach when I was trying to give 'you' life. 'Oh, Nan, you be a beautiful actress.'

"I have to thank you for my first success, and it is hard to find words for that; but I can at least bless and thank you for these many disappointments which this play brought to you before the Pioneers were kind. I hope I have the honour of writing many other plays for you in times to come; but this first one, which you have made so beautiful to me, will always be a proud memory, even if you give those others a life as moving.

"Believe me,

"Yours always very sincerely,

"John Masefield."

Arnold Bennett, who had not seen a play of Masefield before, told me how beautiful he had found "Nan," and showed by the praise which he gave me—"I have never admired your acting more than in the last scene of the second act. You and the scene were simply exquisite"—that he could combine generosity with discrimination in his praise.

Bennett was indeed entirely captivated by "Nan." He confessed in the same letter that, though he was apt to be restive in the theatre, the play "got hold of him" little by little until he was carried away by the last act, which he found "tremendously fine The whole affair startlingly noble." Arnold, though he measured his gifts meticulously never gave grudgingly.

III

The theatre gives little time for relaxation whilst a play is running, but it offers compensation in the generous opportunity for holiday between the seasons.

My relaxation was, and is, travel; a tonic of which I have never yet been able to take too much. Most of my seasons in London were followed by long journeys; sometimes so far as Biskra, sometimes to Athens, sometimes to Palestine or Sicily. I went far, and when I was away I lived as simply as I could and tried to get beyond the reach of British civilisation; sleeping in the desert beyond Biskra beside a tamarisk fire, resting on the shores of Galilee, watching a mirage of pink rocks and pools far over the golden face of the sand hills at Ell-oued. . .

I think it is well that actresses should take their holidays in this way. The temptations to subside into a persistent life of fashion and comfort are strong. There is so much anxiety in the theatre; so much that is uncertain, that it is only natural to seek rest and change in comfort and bright society. But they have their dangers. They are the trains de luxe which conduct to coteries; collections of people who shun the rough and tumble of human existence. That is why I always tried when I went abroad to avoid the smart places. They irk me.

I felt the irksomeness one year acutely when, on arriving in Sicily from Egypt, I was plunged into the life of Taormina, in the fashionable time. I had been far away. Journeying over the desert with our caravan: alone.

On my return I had paused at Syracuse, where I had seen a performance of the "Agamemnon" in the ancient Greek theatre nearby. I had gone back to the empty theatre the day after the performance to enjoy its peace and beauty. Standing above the Greek theatre at Syracuse, I recalled a day when my father and I had visited the British Museum together. He said to me: "Roman architecture is of the flesh, Greek architecture is of the spirit." I felt the truth of this at Syracuse, when I saw the theatre like some vision descending from the skies: a spiritual theatre, gently resting upon the earth, with all kinds of wild flowers, sparkling blue and yellow, red and white, nestling in the crevices between the broken stones. The fashionable crowd had

gone on to Taormina, and I was obliged to follow in their wake, for I was on the way home.

Yet there were compensations. I met one of the most interesting of Englishmen, the Duke of Brontë, the unofficial ruler of Taormina, and the owner of a lovely home and of the garden in which Persephone ran.

All sorts of interesting people were there: Robert Hichens was talking to Miss Dostoevsky, the daughter of the Russian novelist. I watched them. It was a hot day. Miss Dostoevsky, leading a hot and incessant attack of questions and Hichens' replies growing fainter and fainter. Then my turn came. "Tell me about the character and psychology of English women," she said. Hichens, seizing the moment, faded away and left me to the inquisition. *Crime at Châtiment!* What cowards men are! I wanted to ask him what psychology is: however, I extolled the character of English women so bravely that in the end she said: "My father would not have liked to live in England; it's far too good for him."

I returned to England to find a letter from John Masefield, which had been waiting to bid me welcome home again. It was an invitation for the week-end to his house in Berkshire. The house was being redecorated, hence the verse which ends his invitation

"In all the universe there ain't
A beastlier stink than drying paint.
A leaky cask of crude petroleum
Is nothing to new-laid linoleum.
The joy of man and woman's gone
When household water isn't on.
By Tuesday next, with happy fate,
These things will end and we'll be straight."

CHAPTER IX

DRESSING UP AND MAKING UP. THE LIMELIGHT

I 1908

MANY changes had come to the London theatre since the movement of the Court, brave and lonely in Sloane Square. The Court Theatre was lonely no longer. Although Bernard Shaw stamped and raged because the box office takings were not always so large as they should have been, there is no doubt that he had succeeded as the evangelist of the new drama, even though he had not yet triumphed as a social reformer. Other playwrights were following him. They too had discarded conventionality and sentimentality and were thinking clearly and speaking plainly.

The stage was rid of the old paraphernalia. The heavy scenery grew dusty in the property stores, and in its place appeared beautifully decorated curtains, special lighting and wonderful costumes, designed and painted by artists: Norman Wilkinson of Four Oaks and Albert Rutherston.

When "Don Juan in Hell"—the Third Act from "Man and Superman"—was produced at the Court for a series of matinées the stage was draped in black velvet; the stools were also covered with black velvet. Upon all a blinding light was poured; so dazzling that we had to grope our way to our places, discovering with our feet what we could not see with our eyes.

I was to play Donna Ana de Ulloa, the Spanish prototype of Ann Whitefield in "Man and Superman." Robert Loraine was Don Juan. My dress, worn against the sombre black velvet scene, was to be a gorgeous and

colourful thing. Charles Ricketts, R.A., designed the costumes after Velasquez. Mine was a glorious one. Rose silk covered with black lace and silver trimming. In my hair a flame feather.

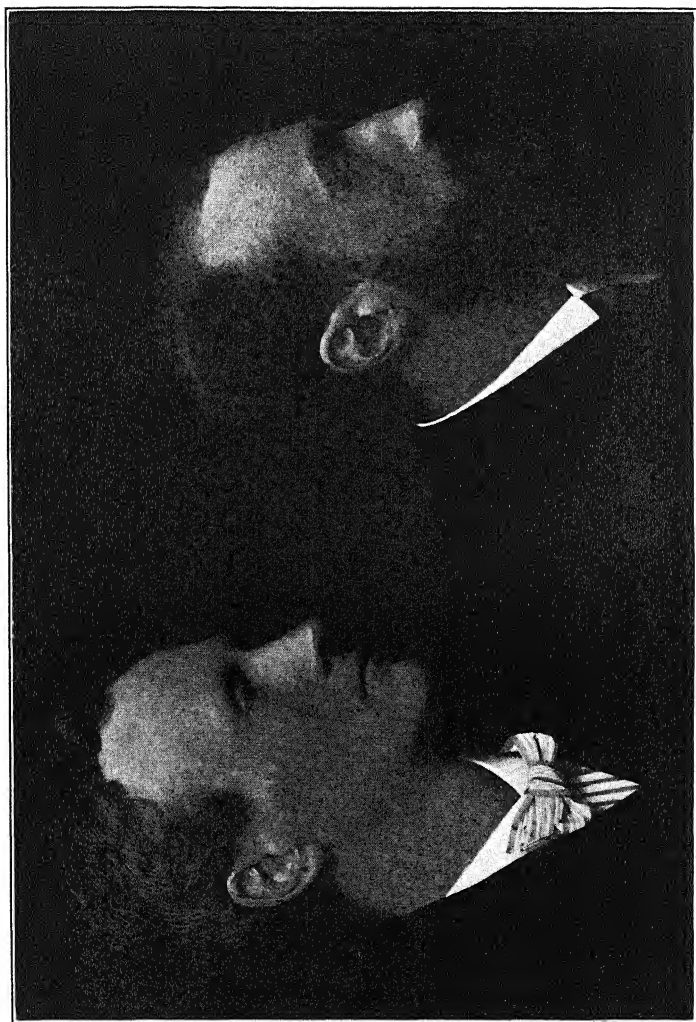
During the creation of this dress I came to know Charles Ricketts and Charles Shannon, two men who shed a radiance over all the life about them. Among my papers are a hundred letters from Ricketts and Shannon, and as many drawings. Stirring them, reading them, evoke now a strange and painful sensation in me. But the pain is mingled with sweetness. I do not think I ever loved any men so much—I loved them with all the quiet and passionless devotion which is not disturbed by death. Their judgments and their kindness are as real to me, and as alive with me now as when I knew them in their studios at Lansdowne House, in Holland Park. Wilde, who used to visit Ricketts and Shannon some years before I knew them, used to say that theirs was "one of the few houses in London where one is never bored."

Few women were invited there, but among the privileged ones were Kathleen Bruce, the sculptor (now Lady Hilton Young), Mrs. Enthoven and myself. I was the model for Shannon's "The Dumb Wife" and for the portraits which he did of me as Donna Ana in Ricketts's Velasquez dress. There were quiet little meals in their flat upon a green marble table, with jade dishes. Everything which came near Shannon and Ricketts was exquisite, yet touched, it seemed, with their own austerity of life. The friendship of Shannon and Ricketts overflowed and blessed all who came near to it. They had been friends from the time they were students at the Lambeth School of Art. They set up housekeeping together as youngsters, and the friendship grew and became richer as they advanced towards success and age. Gordon Bottomley has truly said that Ricketts had the qualities of a universal genius, of "another Leonardo da Vinci." He understood everything except stupidity and vulgarity. Everything he touched he enriched and ennobled.

Ricketts began in black and white design and did his finest work of this kind in the illustration of Wilde's "The Sphinx." He turned to wood engraving and joined with Shannon in producing "Daphnis and Chloe" and "Hero and Leander." He designed three fonts of type for the Vale Press. He published fifty or sixty books from his press, designing the binding and the type, and through them influencing the art of commercial binding more than any man of his time. For several years Ricketts worked upon a number of small bronzes. He designed stage sets for some of the finest productions of his day, ending with the entire mounting of St. Joan. His last stage production was "Queen Elizabeth" for Phyllis Neilson-Terry, but it gives me a deep, although a melancholy, satisfaction to remember that the very last thing he did to help the stage was to design a wonderful costume which I wore when, in a play celebrating Sarah Siddons, I represented that immortal actress playing Lady Macbeth in the sleep-walking scene. It was one of the most wonderful of all his productions. Those who have the artistic temperament will know that I do not exaggerate when I say that the wearing of that dress helped me to convey the tragedy, the horror and the pity which that scene evokes to a greater pitch of intensity than any other of Shakespeare's tragedies.

Beyond all these lesser interests lay the bigger work of his oil-painting. Year by year Ricketts grew in talent and achievement.

All these mediums of expression were no more than the windows through which shone his character and his spirit. Ricketts was born out of his century. His genius and his culture spanned the gap between four centuries. Ricketts was for ever pouring the imagination and spirit of a fourteenth century celibate into his painting. And this rigour of the ascetic shed radiance over everything he did and everything he said. His austerity expressed or implied no criticism of others. I well remember his distress when he spoke of the dark night when Wilde



Photograph by G. C. Beresford, Brompton Road.

CHARLES SHANNON, R.A. AND CHARLES RICKETTS, R.A.

went to him . . . it was the night upon which Wilde received the fatal message which sent him down the wretched path to his ruin. Wilde, it seems, sometimes revolted against the unworldliness which irked him when he visited Shannon and Ricketts. "You are ascetics of art, you turn away from life and, like most painters, you lack curiosity," he told them.

But they found something greater than life in turning away from it: an exquisite friendship in which they worked together with an unselfishness as natural to themselves as it was incredible to others. When Shannon finished the portrait of me as "The Dumb Wife," Ricketts calmly added a butterfly to the veil of the high head-dress, and Shannon, delighted, left it there, and now when I look upon the picture Ricketts's butterfly recalls the delicacy of the devotion they had for one another. The understanding between them was unerring and beautiful.

Ricketts held my love and guided my tempestuous spirit over many rapids. With his letters are a score of postcards, each with a little word of advice or a phrase of congratulation. Once I had been impatient with my dressmaker for the way she worked upon his design. "Don't scold or punish people," he wrote. And in that phrase he revealed the key to his human relationships. Unerring historical knowledge gave his criticism force but the force was never cruel.

When Shannon and Ricketts went abroad, they brought home countless little presents for me. Beads and jewels and rag dolls they had bought "from little Nubian girls with grape-coloured skin and eyes like gazelles." They would buy chameleons from Egyptian children, only to set them free again. Then would come letters from Ricketts, written after he had seen me play. They were letters to strengthen and sustain me in the long monotony of work, but they never tasted of the cloying sweetness of flattery. One of the secrets of Ricketts's charm and of the devotion which his friends felt for him lay in his practice never to "talk down"

to them: rather did he lift them up to his own height. I would enter his room feeling very shy, but we had not been talking for long before I had been made to feel that Ricketts wanted not to teach but to learn from me. Only a great man and great gentleman could show such gracious kindness. Another great man once declared, "It is not what a nation gets but what a nation gives that makes that nation great." True it is of nations and of men, and truer of none than of Charles Ricketts.

I set down two or three phrases from his letters to show how keenly Ricketts would interest himself in the work of other people. Of Chaliapin he wrote:

"Don't miss Prince Igor. Chaliapin's burly, brutal and engaging interpretation of one part is equalled by his exotic aspect and movement in the other character. In one character he is a beefy giant, in the second a small, weird Mongolian creature with enchanting asiatic gestures. During the superb dances, don't watch the dancers but watch him."

Towards the end of the War he wrote:

"There is a high field, untouched, in religious drama. Oberammergau, 'Everyman,' even the subversive 'Miracle' have succeeded, and years of Handels Festivals have also been a success. This will be more than ever noticeable after the War, for there must be an end to merely national words of art, such as 'Potash and Perlmutter,' 'Raffles,' etc. . . . 'Parsifal' made money for thirty years."

In another letter, written when I was producing Shaw's "Annajanska, or The Wild Grand Duchess" in 1918, he says: "The secret of male attire is perfect cut, worn with negligence." But Charles Ricketts's negligence was another's fastidiousness. He designed my dresses for many years and he painted most of them. Sometimes he would work so late at night for me that the dress would

arrive at the theatre still smelling of its new paint. Yet he never accepted a fee from me but once. Why he did not, I do not know. It was some noble quality in the way he thought of his work: a giving not a getting!

II

I once heard a famous dramatic critic—a Frenchman—say: "The theatre: it is the art of preparation." He was, of course, thinking of the playwright's art, but what he said is also true of the art of actor or of actress.

There are two types of actress. The professional creed of the one is "improvisation," that of the other "preparation." The one relies on genius, personality or popularity, the other on hard work: on the genius which is the infinite capacity for taking pains. One actress, and she may be a great actress, sits at the tea or bridge-table till the last minute and then jumps up with the exclamation: "I must be on the stage in twenty minutes. Car, please! Quick, Stage Door!" Dressing Room. "Curtain going up, my dear," says her dresser. In a flash she is out of her clothes and into them again, and on the stage just in time to get the applause which she expects and receives upon her entrance. But it is walking on a tight-rope without the balancing bar, wonderful when it's successful, but very apt to result in a fall.

The other—prosaic soul—rests all the afternoon; eats frugally, drinks nothing: goes to her dressing-room an hour and a half before the curtain rises. Her "dresser" is waiting for her: "Lock the door, Kate," she says. "I've done it, my dear"—we're always "dear" to our dressers. "Your mother came to see you yesterday before you went on the stage, and when you began to act you spoke exactly like her." Wax melted in the fire of passion—passion for acting—takes any and every impression.

Make up: the actress sits before her mirror. Grease paint; though less is used upon the stage than in ordinary

life. Mechanically she sets about making up: foundation white; eyelashes—still worn on the stage—rouge; the dresser combing out the wig meanwhile. An hour passes and the actress is still sitting before the glass. "Vanity of vanities," saith the preacher. "Nothing of the kind," says the actress. "Don't *you* make up, wash yourself and smooth your hair and put on your surplice and above all sit and think before your performances? So do I!" Here whilst I am doing these trumpery things, bedizen-ing myself as you would say, a great peace, the peace of relaxation enters my soul. My mind, which lives on the surface of my brain, goes to sleep and when it does the mind inside the brain—Cox to the other's Box—wakes up and whispers in my sleeping ear all kinds of strange and wonderful truths which it alone knows. If I were awake and busy, it could never tell me of them.

Make up finished: "Now, Kate, my dress." I look at myself before the glass and she stares at me. "It does make you look so wicked, my dear, cruel hard." I have to be wicked and "cruel hard," that's my part.

Clothes may not make the man, but they make the woman. Men's philosophy, the philosophy they put into books, is so virtuous, so plausible and so wonderful that some women go so far as to think they ought to believe it. None does. They know it is lop-sided: adamant.

Clothes make the actress. They impart their character to her. Edith Evans, whose art is so consummate, knows all about that. By dressing to the part she becomes the part, as surely as it becomes her.

The tranquillity of the dressing room before the play. Close, often stuffy, glaring light. The actress putting the finishing touches to her face before the mirror. Kate, the confidante, hovering silent in the background, with a towel in one hand and a brush in the other, eager to gossip, but she knows her time as well as place.

Peace, relaxation, the unbending of the bow, which life is always trying to keep taut. Shaw comprehends this need for relaxation. The Circus girl in "Misalliance"

reads a chapter of the Psalms before she goes on to do her perilous turn. Blasphemous fellow. No, no! The Psalms were written for her, to bring her peace and tranquillity, to soothe her nerve and rest her eye. Charles Ricketts understands—all his letters show it. He knows that the part which the actress plays is a dual part: a duet between herself and the clothes she wears, and that if her clothes are out of harmony, the result is discord and not music.

I think the happiest time of Ricketts's association with the theatre was when we were producing Shaw at the Court. In those days, Ricketts was delighted and inspired by seeing Bernard Shaw at work. But the association between them seemed to end sadly for, while Ricketts reached the summit of his career in the designing of the scenes and costumes for "St. Joan," he also suffered disappointment in his admiration for Shaw. At the time when "St. Joan" was being produced, Ricketts and Shannon lived in the Keep of Chilham Castle, in Kent. Within, they made it beautiful and, without, beneath a far-spreading cedar, they had a peaceful garden. It was the kitchen of Chilham Castle that Ricketts used in designing the setting of the first scene of "St. Joan."

Ricketts found a changed Shaw in these later years. "He was a sympathetic producer in the old days," he wrote to me. "His little lectures in the wings and exaggerated renderings of what he wanted were delightful. To-day, he only thinks of his points and, I believe, dislikes good acting and production."

In spite of my devotion to Shaw and my belief in his genius, I cannot refrain from asking, "Is Ricketts right?"

III

Charles Ricketts, Norman Wilkinson, Albert Rutherton, added by their exquisite designs to the pleasure which every actress, as well as every woman, feels in dressing-up. The changing customs have, however,

altered altogether the art of making-up in the theatre. The change is due to the setting of the actor-manager's star and the extinction of the limelight. When the star sank, he took his limelight with him. The great actor-managers with whom I acted—Wilson Barrett, Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree and H. B. Irving, followed the Sir Henry Irving tradition. They sought the limelight and ensued it. Those who know nothing of theatrical tradition and custom might be tempted to think that it was vanity that led the actor-manager stars to seek the limelight. It was not; although they would have been only human, if once having enjoyed it, man's common endowment of vanity kept them in it. The truth is that stars did not use the limelights in the first place for reasons of personal vanity; they used it because the plays in which they acted required it. They were emphatic plays and limelight was the emphasis they needed. Prompt Side and O.P. (opposite Prompt Side) had their limelight boxes from which duets of rays showered upon the star, and he shone in the glory or the weirdness of the light they shed. Svengali would lose all his mystery without the limelight. The effect of the Prompt Side and O.P. limelight was, however, to invest the more terrestrial members of the cast in darkness. They played as it were in permanent eclipse. To be a leading lady then was something like what living at the back of the moon must be, except that although its brightness never enveloped them, they nevertheless could see the glare of the sun. The limelight used in this way had curious psychological effects, the chief and worst of which was that we shadowy figures, groping our way on a shadowy stage, were apt to be left also to grope after the interpretation of the parts we played.

Of the actor-managers I have named, Wilson Barrett was the only one who refused to let the glare of his limelight blind his vision to what was necessary for the production of a company of players. He alone made a constant practice of helping every member of the cast

to play his part, and he did it moreover with infinite care and patience. Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree took a different view; though not from lack of interest in the performances and careers of those who acted with him. He was the kindest and most generous of colleagues. But he was a Prime Minister of the theatre of the Asquith School. He assumed that his heads of department, the chief actors and actresses who played with him, knew their business and did not require him to teach them. Yet he was quick to intervene when any of us showed that we did not know our business. I have already told how, when I was playing Lady Fancourt in "Agatha," he improvised my make-up from the wall paper. Another time also, when in 1911 I was rehearsing the part of Lady Norma in Zangwill's play "The War God," I had occasion to learn how insistent he was on the right way of doing things. I was the revolutionary murderess of Tolstoy, Tree was the Apostle of Peace, and I must fire the fatal shot which takes his life. I used to point the pistol straight at his heart: "Put it down, put it down, point it nearer the ground" he would say. But when the fatal moment came, excitement always made me forget his injunction, and he would see the pistol pointing straight at his heart. Ingenious man—he found an elegant solution: "I must stand with my back to the audience and point the pistol to the ground." "Nobody will notice it," he said, and nobody did.

It was in 1904 just after Wilson Barrett's death when I joined Beerbohm Tree and acted with him in "The Man's Shadow," "The Ballad Monger," "Julius Caesar," "Agatha," and later on "The War God." Had I not been attracted by the more diffuse light of the Court Theatre, I might have remained leading lady to the star-actor-manager, and in course of time the Prompt Side and O.P. limelights might have spared a little of their radiance from the star to shed upon my countenance. But I went to the Court and can therefore claim with literal truth that I have never been in the limelight.

The only occasion that I acted with Sir John Martin Harvey was when we played "Oedipus Rex" in 1912, but that was Reinhardt's production, and Martin Harvey naturally left the business of producing the play to him. It is a lasting regret that I have never since played with this great actor, supreme in the speaking of verse, and one moreover who has succeeded in doing what most others, Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson excepted, have found impossible, namely, making the play of "Hamlet" a great stage play, and Hamlet himself, not only a poet lost in soliloquy, but a man distracted mortally by fearful doubt.

Whilst I played in "Oedipus," I was once curious enough to peep into Sir Martin Harvey's own copy of the play and was delighted to find there evidence of the way in which he studies the parts he plays. It was full of little sketches of himself, each sketch representing the emotion required by the passage of the play beside which it was drawn. I was delighted because it was the very method which I had followed ever since I went on the stage.

IV

In the summer of 1910, Shaw wished me to play Mary Fitton in "The Dark Lady of the Sonnets." My wishes were otherwise. I had a hankering to play Elizabeth, and I wrote to tell him so. I played neither part, for I fell ill, but Shaw's reply to my plea for Elizabeth shows his wizardry at its worst.

"... your fancy for the part of Elizabeth is most distracting. Here you are, a ready-made dark lady, and you want to build up your nose into a hook, stick on a frizzy red wig and ferret's eyebrows and prance about as Queen Elizabeth, whom you do not in the least resemble. Also, the Dark Lady has to supply a little storm of sincere emotion which needs some real acting power, whereas all the rest is arti-

ficial rhetoric, and can be put on by anybody. My notion is to condemn you to the Dark Lady and 'Tragedy in the Masque,' and to get Gertrude Kingston to do Elizabeth. I do not at all agree that you should give up your entry in the Masque: it is far too splendid to be thrown away, and just what is wanted to show your recent inactivity did not mean a loss of your figure or good looks. Nobody thinks of Queen Elizabeth as a young woman: but the Dark Lady may be eighteen. The first suggestion for Elizabeth was Genevieve Ward: I want Gertrude Kingston because she will be neither too old nor too young, and can give the unsympathetic side of Elizabeth without being undignified.

"Of course, if I cannot get this—if all historical versimilitude is to be thrown over, and Elizabeth is to be simply a handsome leading lady, then you might as well commit that outrage as anybody else; but I see no necessity for this.

"May Gertrude Kingston be asked to play Elizabeth without driving you to wash your hands of the whole business? I think you had better send Phil Carr a line direct.

". . . On Sunday morning I shall go down to Oxford to lunch with Robert Bridges, and return to Ayot in the evening. Then I shall probably die. On Wednesday I got a sort of lightning before death under the influence of which I did a week's work in sixteen hours: and now the lamp of life burns extremely low. I am therefore incapable of resisting any ultimatum which you may plank down; so do not abuse your advantage.

"You as old Elizabeth would be a wretched spectacle; besides, as Mary, you would have the satisfaction of clouting the other woman's head."

V

Among the new friends I made in the days of Shakespeare at the Savoy was Eddie Marsh. Then, as now, to go to any social function and not see Eddie Marsh there is to know that you've gone to the wrong house. Always conspicuous by his unassertiveness Eddie Marsh is a man who gives everything he has to the life about him, without asking anything from it. He is a Maecenas of poetry and painting. I know nobody who approaches writing and painting so unselfishly, and few people who approach them with such taste, kindness and prophetic gift.

At the time when I first met him, Eddie Marsh was fostering the Georgian poets. The war had not come to scatter the little coterie, Gordon Bottomley, Wilfrid Gibson, de la Mare, Rupert Brooke and John Drinkwater. It seemed that English soil was about to blossom forth once again in great poetry after its fallow time had passed, and that Eddie Marsh was to be the herald and patron of the poets. His collection of verse in the Georgian poetry books fed the hope. Eddie Marsh prefaced the collection by stating his belief "that English poetry is now once more again putting on a new strength and beauty." It seemed that most of the youthful poets were true to Dunsany's canon: that a poet should "see at a glance the glory of the world, know Nature as a botanist knows a flower, hear at moments 'the clear voice of God.'" There were evenings in Eddie Marsh's flat in Gray's Inn when I listened to new and strange and powerful voices, whilst gazing at the walls covered with new and strange and powerful paintings.

One night, Eddie Marsh brought Rupert Brooke to see me at the Savoy Theatre. The door opened, and I beheld the most beautiful boy I had ever seen. Slim, with no superfluous flesh to interrupt the lines of his slimness, a sensitive and tender face, crowned by a tumult of hair: "A young Apollo, golden-haired."

Rupert Brooke came into the room and sat on the edge of the table. Some subtlety in the play (it was "Twelfth Night") had disturbed him. He wanted to know what emotion it was that made me lower my eyes and head after a certain phrase. His eyes were big and full of questions. Everyone felt more alive for being near him. Many times he came to my dressing room. I got to look for and welcome the sight of his youthfulness, his beauty, his excitement over life, and his curiosity about everything that life was hiding from him.

The war came and found Rupert Brooke, the poet, in the uniform of the soldier, and then we heard that he was among those whom death had claimed.

One Sunday night, not long after Rupert Brooke had died, I was sitting in the Hydro at Ilkley, waiting for a train. There was a concert in the hall of the hotel and the Yorkshiremen from the neighbourhood had crowded in to hear the singers. I was neither known or noticed, as I sat listening to the music; but at the end of the concert, several people recognised me and asked me to recite poetry for them. It was an audience still tired from the war, there was the weariness of death and anxiety in the faces of all of them. I began with Blake's lines:

"And did those feet in ancient times . . ."

Then I spoke three of Rupert's Sonnets: "Peace," "The Dead," and "The Soldier."

My taxicab was waiting outside and I was to leave. I know it was the beauty of the poetry which aroused them. I have spoken poetry often enough to be able to know whether people's emotion is sincere or not. The audience in the hall of that hotel had been stirred to intense feeling by the three sonnets. They gathered around me, eager as children, asking me to say more poetry. Poetry can be made to appeal to people just as much as music does if only it is spoken as faithfully as

music is played and without the tedious tricks of conventional elocution.

Rupert Brooke's death still focuses for me much of the tragedy of the war. It seemed at once so tragic and so vain that such a figure of beauty, such a quick eye for beauty in others, such a creature of beauty, should perish.

When Rupert Brooke made his journey to the Antipodes, he paused in the South Seas, upon an island "where the slow fragrant-breathing nights crept past," and from among the "flower-crowned laughing swimmers" he wrote his letters home. I delight to remember that he recalls our friendship in them. He wrote "in a hot noon, under an orange tree," telling of the night before, when he had stayed in the house of a mountain chief, in Fiji.

The dark chief, he said, had "spasmodic yearnings after civilisation," and when these attacked him strongly, he sent a runner down from his rude habitation to buy English illustrated papers in the coastal town some miles away. The Chief could read no English, and Rupert found that his one way of satisfying his craving for civilisation was to paste the pictures from the "Sketch" and the "Tatler" and others upon the walls of his hut.

"He knows no English" wrote Rupert Brooke, "but he pastes his favourite pictures up round the wall and muses over them. I lectured on them—fragments of the 'Sketch' and 'Sphere' for several years—to a half-naked, reverent audience . . . The Prince of Wales, looking like an Oxford graduate, elbows two ladies who display 1911 spring fashions. A golf champion in a most contorted position occupies a central place. He is regarded, I fancy, as a rather potent and violent deity. To his left is Miss Viola Tree as Euridice, to his right Miss Lillah McCarthy as Jocasta, looking infinitely Mycenaen.

"I explained about incest, shortly, and Miss McCarthy rose tremendously in Fijian estimation.

Why do people like their gods to be so eccentric, always? I fancy I left the impression that she was Mr. H. H. Hilton's mother and wife. It is so hard to explain our civilisation to simple people. Anyhow, I disturbed their theology and elevated Lillah to top place . . ."

When Eddie Marsh edited Rupert Brooke's memoirs, he asked me if I *minded* his using the letter. Mind indeed! What woman ever minded being worshipped, even by savages!

CHAPTER X

ACTRESS-MANAGER.

I 1910

IN the spring of 1910 I was very ill and, a weak and suffering creature, was taken off to stay with Mr. and Mrs. H. G. Wells at Sandgate, near Folkestone. For days I lay in their garden, looking out over the sea, enjoying the remoteness from noise and action, the sense of escape from calendars and clocks. In the naïve way we have with friends, I thought I knew Wells. I had learned to admire the brilliant and varying energy of his mind, but I had always stood a little in awe of him. Wells can be so formidable. There in his home with the brine-charged air of Sandgate blowing over the garden, I got a fuller measure of the exuberance of his genius; exceeding that of any other writer of his time; boundless like the sea and no less varied; now boisterous, now rippling with the gentlest sunny smile. To see the intentness with which he worked was to recognise how resolute and how mature he was. But when I saw Wells at play, my awe of him vanished altogether, for I found that the man, for all his strenuousness, had not outlived the boy. Yet even in play, his mind took at least as much exercise as his body. No conventional game for Wells. He invents his own; some ball game, a sort of tennis without a lawn and with bare fists for racquets, and off he must go and play it: and while he plays, the muddles of the world, which presently he must begin once again to set right, are all forgotten. What a subject for an essay for anyone who could write. Wells, bounding like the ball he punches, and of course hitting harder than anyone else. Shaw, swimming like a dolphin far out

at sea, Arnold Bennett taking a skipping-rope from my hand and with such exquisite lightness of foot, skipping, skipping, until I grow out of breath counting one hundred, two hundred, five hundred, a thousand, before he gets out of breath with skipping. Barrie bowling at E. V. Lucas in an improvised cricket match, with an eye like a goshawk, deft and dextrous, loving the game for its own sake, but ever more ready to find pleasure in encouraging others than in his own efforts. Galsworthy, walking and walking and coming back serene and immaculate no matter how long the tramp, nor how heavy the going has been.

On that visit to Sandgate, Wells happened to find out that there were many of his books that I had not read. This would never do! I must make use of my leisure to lie on the *chaise-longue* in the garden and go through a thorough course of Wells. I did. And though I thought at first that it would prove as irksome as taking the waters, I came to love the new worlds that he had discovered for me. To-day "The Invisible Man" and then "The Time Machine," "The Island of Doctor Moreau," and so on through the whole collection. No skipping, Bennett could do that if he liked; each evening a catechism which, though severe, was no less instructive and delightful than the books themselves. And so that sturdy figure with nothing prepossessing about it save the unforgettable eyes, charged with thought, yet with unfathomable depths of kindness, came to personify a dear friend. And time has proved that there is nothing in the world more steadfast than his friendship, to which absence sets no interruption and time no term. Wells may change his convictions but never his friendships.

Is there any other man in whom so many forces struggle for expression? Justice with passion, enthusiasm with art, tumultuousness with tenderness? Are not his books the reflection of these manifold characteristics: an encyclopædia of his strivings, an epitome of the unceasing development of his mind? His books may

often be rough-hewn, but who else could work in such a varied mass of material? And, moreover, who has written anything more beautiful, more charged with poignant yearning, than the first chapters of "The Passionate Friends"? Sooner or later, in every man who deserves to be called great, the poet reveals himself, and in these chapters I found that Wells is also of that shining company.

In those Sandgate days, and for many years afterwards, there was still beside him, softening his asperities, encouraging his enthusiasm, aiding his work, the exquisite and gracious Jane, his wife. She was the sweetest of companions, and the most capable of critics, holding sway over all our hearts, with a gentleness which had nothing of weakness in it, ordering her household and tending her garden with an efficiency so complete that everything seemed to go right of its own accord.

As I got to know the daily life at Sandgate, the industry of Wells amazed me more and more. Awake at dawn, his first care was to boil the kettle placed ready overnight, and make himself a cup of tea. Then to work. He worked till the job in hand was done, knowing no hours, and forgetful of all else in the world. To-day it is the same. At one o'clock came a substantial meal after the back of the day's work was broken. He emerged, all pre-occupation thrown off, bubbling over with fun and chaff. Then came play in the garden, archery perhaps; if so, no ordinary target would do. He had had recently a battle royal with Shaw—a Fabian engagement but with no Fabian tactics on either side. We must make an effigy of Shaw, with red beard and red nose. How slanderous of that pale, ascetic face which we all admire now. We must aim our arrows at the effigy and go on until he is as full of them as St. Sebastian. Or else we must play comic croquet. The very name declares his genius, for who else could have found comedy in croquet. Tea at four o'clock and then off H.G. goes to work again. The evening meal was on a

side-board. We must help ourselves, for it would often be ten o'clock before he appeared again. Tired, perhaps, but still with an exuberance which neither work nor time could quench.

II

Whilst I was at Sandgate, an excited letter from William Archer came into my easy, lazy life. Archer had been travelling through Norway, and had seen a play by Wiers Jansen called "Anna Pedersdotter." It had thrown him into ecstasies and with his letter he sent a rough translation of the play.

It was a play about uncanny and revolting things: witchcraft and incest, but its dark and terrible power possessed me as it had possessed William Archer. The theme was so terrible that anyone of theatrical experience could tell that it would not appeal to the general run of the theatre-going public. Yet those who know anything of life and of the dark places of the human mind would see that it dealt with stark realities; realities which had played a sinister part in the life of past ages. The tumult of emotions which it evoked in me might call forth similar and no less intense feelings in them. In any case when I heard Anne the Witch mocking the world with her derisive laughter, shrill as the shrieking wind across stormy seas, I felt as though she had bewitched me, and was making me play her part. It may be that reaction from the parts I had been playing—the strong, sane, supernormal women of Shaw counted, without my realising it, in my decision. Perhaps those brilliant women with their steely brains were getting a little too clever for me, and I had to seek refuge from them in the frenzy of emotions and passions which rioted through the play.

I sent it to Bernard Shaw. He would have none of it:

"That sort of thing is no use for London, except, of course, as a mere pretext for a tearing personal sensation on the part of the actress. . . . When you

are no longer a curiosity and a novelty on the stage, people begin to pick and choose the plays in which they will go and see you, and I do not think they would choose 'Anna Pedersdotter'. . . . You could pull a few performances through; and it would be 'well spoken of' like a middling hotel in Baedeker; but I doubt whether there would be more in it than that."

The letter seemed to me to miss everything that mattered. There have been witches: belief in witchcraft in past ages tortured and terrified the world. The dark power of witchcraft called forth emotions stronger and more terrible than those which arise in us from the contemplation of less hideous things.

I wanted John Masefield to make an adaption of Anna Pedersdotter. His racy English, as of the fresh air, would bring some cleanness into this unclean thing. He wouldn't. The Censor would never pass it. The play as it stood sinned no less against Art than against Nature.

Evil may have grandeur in it; but the evil in Anna degenerates as the drama unfolds: from a sinful figure great and tragic, she becomes a mere passionate wanton. Yet the uncanniness and terror of the play began to take hold of Masefield. Slowly he relented. He would do a translation for £20 down and £20 in a year's time; but would not put his name to it.

Under his sure dramatic sense, the play was cleansed. The Anna Pedersdotter that he created is a great figure, consistently evil, but one whose sins are not drab but as scarlet.

Masefield's adaptation intensified my eagerness to produce the play. I set about trying to get it staged. No manager would look twice at it, but I persisted in my determination. The Court Theatre was taken for six afternoons and "The Witch" was at last produced. From time to time I played the part in other theatres. Wherever "The Witch" appeared she excited intense emotions and strong feelings. There were sometimes

hisses at the end of the play, but whether they were protests or manifestations of loathing of the evil of this demonic woman I neither know nor care. For all manner of people who came to see the play fell under its spell. They too were stricken with the intense emotions which I myself used to feel when acting the part of Anna. They felt so profoundly that they wrote and told me their impressions. I still possess innumerable letters written by people who are judges of plays and acting, and they prove to me that my instinct was right in compelling me to play the part of Anna. To reproduce any of these letters as a whole would not become me, for it would entail the setting down of all kinds of flattering expressions and in writing of "The Witch" I have something far more important in my mind than to find occasion for others' praise of myself. I therefore, for the most part, give only extracts from these letters. Jerome K. Jerome praises the play without reserve, but then that delightful man, whose generous appreciation still warms my heart, was one of the comparatively rare writers who knew how to enjoy being carried away by the emotions of the theatre. He wrote:

"I must write to tell you how great I thought your acting in 'The Witch.' It is a wonderful play, and you are wonderful in it. I have never seen anything that has more impressed me. It haunts one. If the English public cared for Drama, it would be drawing all London."

An old friend wrote breezily, with the privilege which old friends allow themselves and are allowed, but evidently he too felt the thrill of it:

"M. . . . says I am to write to you—she pinched two stalls last night for 'The Witch,' and I went with Colonel F. . . . and we both thought the play was quite one of the best we have ever seen. I feel it is

great cheek and impertinence to write as now you have knocked out Sarah Bernhardt in one round and avenged Bombardier Wells's defeat, and have become the champion actress. I think it an excellent plan not to have 'The Witch' every night as you put such a lot into it that if you went on you would turn into a witch, and the stalls would be full of dead bodies and the Archbishop would be after you. Thank you very much for having given me such a thrilling evening."

Women, when touched by emotion, are often less reticent than men, and Henrietta Watson's letter illustrates the fact. She wrote:

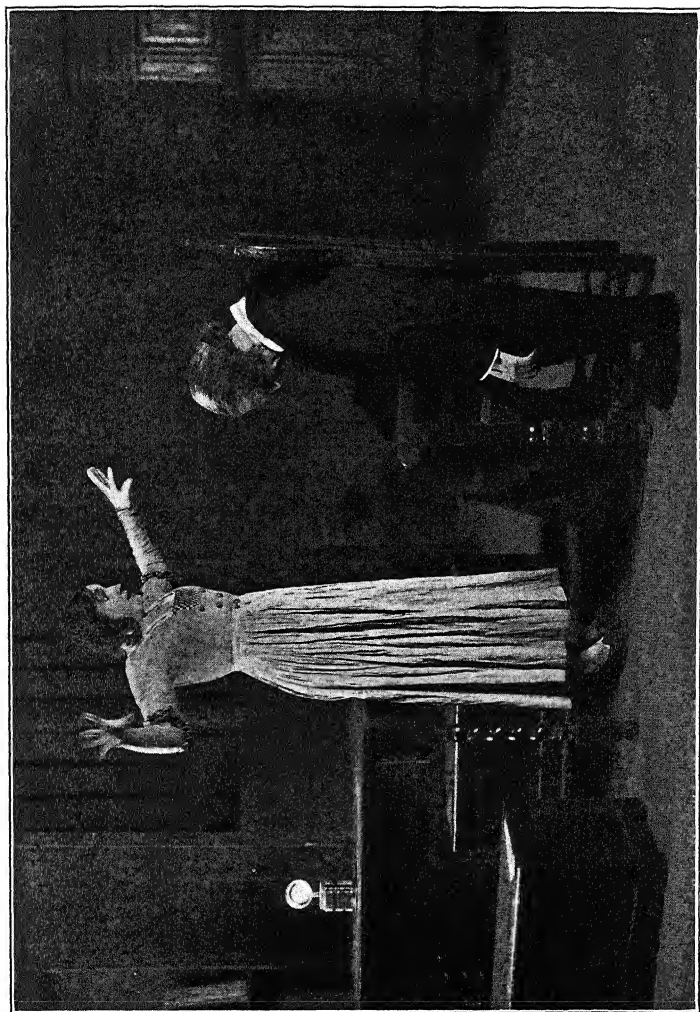
"I wish I could half tell you what you made me feel to-day in 'The Witch'—I've been simply dithering ever since—you positively mesmerised me. I was glued to your extraordinary expression the whole time; if I hadn't been holding a big muff and bigger hat, I know I should have been over the edge of the circle—I never knew you possessed that wonderful, terrible power."

Lady Tree wrote:

"I cannot tell you how splendid and wonderful I thought you this afternoon, nor how I *adored* the play and the acting. I was more moved and enthralled than I have been for many and many a long day; and again I do not know how to express how extraordinarily fine I thought you were."

Madame Albanesi's letter is of interest because it shows that she understood the historical sanction of the play:

"I saw 'The Witch' to-day, and I must send you a few lines to say how much it impressed. You were a succession of beautiful pictures, and one was



Photograph by Daily Mirror Studios.

LILLAH MCCARTHY AS "ANNE PEDERSDOTTER"
CLAUDE KING AS "ABSOLOM."
in "The Witch," by John Masefield, at The Court Theatre in 1911

literally transported back into an age which must have been terrible to live in. I found parts of your work instinct with genius and particularly in your play of expression with hands and face, and I don't think any actress living could have conveyed so much in your moments of repose. My warmest truest congratulations and my thanks."

Baden-Powell, now Lord Baden-Powell, one of my oldest friends from early days in South Africa, makes a point with which all who listen to tragedy on the stage will agree:

"May I offer my very sincere congratulations, my dear Miss McCarthy, on your splendid performance in 'The Witch.' I saw it for the first time to-day and, in common with many friends who were there, I thought it as near perfection as could be desired. I hope you will give us some more of it later on. One point we all deplored: and I know it is impertinence to mention it—but here it is. At the end of each act you had gripped your audience and got them hypnotised, and then up goes the curtain and the spell is all broken and shattered by the actors being all on their feet to receive applause. I believe that is where half the success of the French actors lies, viz., in getting hold of their audience and then never relaxing their grip but rather tightening it till, at the end, it is rapt enthusiasm which moves them.

"Can't you introduce it here?"

But of all the many letters I received that which follows, from Laurence Housman, seems to me to show such fine perception of the essence of tragedy as to make it valuable to any artist who essays a tragic role.

"I made eyes at you from the stalls last night, but caught no answering gleam. This is just to say from my sister and myself that we thought your performance

fine—a most difficult thing pulled off—should I say ‘pulled out of the fire’ or ‘into the fire’?—just about as well as could be. Especially I liked your call of Martin and the waiting for him to come. I wish I liked the play anything so much as well. It is the most uncomfortably horrible thing I have seen for a long time, and the author does not seem to me to make it quite clear whether he wishes us for the purposes of the play to dip our minds into belief in witch-craft—and for the time share it—or whether he would only show how people were driven by the atmosphere of their time to believe themselves witches. If so I don’t think he gets the note of pity nearly strong enough, and that, to me, is where the play fails. We are horrified and lacerated without being given a sufficiently human and permanent basis for the standardising of our feelings—so different from the ‘Trojan Women’ where the horror was just as intense, but the great human note of underlying values too resonant to be missed. It all made me deadly uncomfortable without sufficient excuse for the discomfort: and I vote you do Lady Macbeth with all speed. There you will give me horror I can accept without spiritual vomitings—if the phrase may be allowed.

“I hope you thrive within yourself and are enjoying giving us these goose-flesh creeps. Ow-wow! I haven’t got over them yet.”

I have read the letter many times. It has helped me to understand that, just as all great tragedy is built on the two emotions of fear and pity, so the art of the tragic actress must always be to evoke in her audience at the first moment when the play begins to reach its climax those two emotions, and evoke them simultaneously. This can only be done by conveying across the footlights the inevitableness and the irrevocableness of tragic fate. The curtain rises on Lady Macbeth in the sleep-walking scene. There must be an instant presentation of the pathos, as well as the horror, of it all; so that the audience

are imbued with pity, no less than horror. As the scene proceeds, the horror will grow more and more terrible. Shakespeare will see to that; but for the other and no less essential emotion of pity—his lines can only be stage directions. And what superb stage directions they are! "What's done cannot be undone." "All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand." These are the cues which Shakespeare gives so subtly to teach the actor that, unless pity sheds a celestial radiance on it, the gloom of tragedy is too terrible to be endured.

And so, illuminated by Laurence Housman, I can turn to "The Witch" and realise that, in spite of the intensity of horror which it has, the play falls far short of the great examples of tragic drama. Yet it is, I think, a play always worth putting on the stage, for it recalls, as perhaps no other can do, the tragic passions which long ruled the world. This generation turns away from the tragic drama; the war took its place, but tragedy must come to its own again if the theatre is to survive. Comedy is pitiless: tragedy is pitiful.

A country which knows no tragedy may be distinguished for its tolerance, but never for its compassion.

Herein "The Witch" fell short of great tragedy. It terrified but it did not purify the mind by compassion. Shaw said that my acting was "grizzly—a piece of unmitigated horror." John Masefield, whilst admitting that I was "very fine" added: "when you cackle you gave me a sensation I never had before. You don't know how uncanny you were." Ah, but I did.

III 1911

"The Witch" had made me ambitious. I wanted to have a larger share in choosing and producing plays than I had had hitherto.

The Court Theatre had given me wonderful opportunities of acting in the new drama, but it had not showered riches upon me. In the Wilson Barrett days, my

salary had been £30 a week. I played in Ann Whitefield and other Shaw parts for £12 a week. Nor could it have been otherwise, for the finance behind the Court Theatre was very limited. Shaw, realist though he be, would never have devoted so much time and space in his letters to financial considerations had he not known of what paramount importance they were to the maintenance of "full services" by the Court Theatre.

I determined to give rein to my ambition; but what to do! Decision came to me one crisp February morning. Unless money could be found a big venture in the theatre was beyond us. I was living in my flat over the Little Theatre in the Adelphi. I went out into the brisk air. I walked along, looking once down the street towards Bernard Shaw's door, and then, walking all the way, I crossed Trafalgar Square and found my way to Belgrave Square. My inspiration was Lord Howard de Walden. I knew him as a poet, as a man of taste and as one who was interested in the theatre. I told my story. I wanted to go into management. Lord Howard de Walden was a little taken aback at being attacked so early in the morning, but within a few minutes, I was standing in the middle of his room (there was a bowl of amazing lilies rising, like ivory goblets, from a table at my elbow) with a handsome cheque in my hands!

It must be remembered that I had never embarked upon such a campaign before. I know nothing about business. I was thirty-two before I knew that eighteen pence are not one shilling and eightpence, and even now I do all my addition sums on my fingers. I was overwhelmed at the finding of this new power. I had walked briskly from the Adelphi to Belgrave Square. I *ran* back, waving the cheque for any snatching fellow to take from me, if he dared. I climbed the stairs into G.B.S.'s flat and said: "See! I am going to be an actress-manager, with my own theatre, and here is the beginning of the capital." Before the day was out, my friend Lily Antrobus gave me another cheque and help also coming from another quarter I went to bed that night an actress-

manager in embryo, with a capital of two thousand pounds under my pillow.

I woke up realizing that only half my task was done. I must find a play. By whom! By Shaw of course. I went to him again. Yes he would do it and ever faithful to his word, he sat down and wrote "Fanny's First Play." I went out and bought a lease of the Little Theatre. I appeared in four pieces before "Fanny's First Play": "The Sentimentalists," by George Meredith, "Farewell Supper," by Schnitzler, "The Twelve Pound Look," by Sir James Barrie and Ibsen's "Master Builder." Then came Shaw's play. It ran for two years and a half, paying its way but making no fortunes for any of us.

Shaw is an imp of mischief. It is no use the public hugging its picture of a tyrant, emitting epigrams like fire blades, for ever wise. He can exasperate his friends with his impishness and then, with a fine gesture, turn upon you when you protest and say "I'll have the law on you." It is his favourite retort in time of exasperation. Knowing him is like trying to know the weather. But unless you know his kindness as well, you do not know Shaw. It was his mood, when he finished the play, to surround it with all kinds of mystery. He handed me the manuscript saying: "I have not put my name to it." He wrote: "Do everything to suggest the play is by Barrie. . . . You can say with good conscience that the author's name begins with a capital B."

Never was there such a hopelessly unsuccessful attempt to hoodwink the public. Before twenty lines had been cast over the footlights, there were whispers of "It's Shaw. Of course it's Shaw."

Within a few weeks, "Fanny's First Play" had gone beyond the fame of the old Court Theatre audiences. It was Coronation year. London was filled with foreign visitors who had come to celebrate the beginning of the new Georgian regime. We had seen a new king pass along the Mall, a man in whom the English tradition shone as splendidly as ever. We had seen the new queen, tall and beautiful, smiling a promise of new years of new

security. London was alive and rich and keen. "Fanny" swam forward on the tide. Shaw was no longer the prophet of the few who worshipped at the shrine of the Court. The shop-girl, the storekeeper, the suburban mother and the kindly old gentleman who played bowls in Surbiton, all came to see the wicked Mr. Shaw and found that, after all, he was only a jolly fellow who wrote a jolly play. I liked the part of Margaret Knox, a swift daring girl, with humour and tenderness. Just before, I had been playing Hilda Wangel, in "The Master Builder." How cheerful it was to turn from her cruelty to this refreshing creation of Shaw's. I don't think any of his characters are cruel. They laugh at the foibles of human nature, but they seldom draw their brows together and deride.

The figure of Shaw making fun pleased the nine hundred and ninety-nine, but some of his more serious-minded friends of the old Fabian days shook their heads with concern. This was not the earnest spirit which had threatened to set the world on fire in order to make it free. Mrs. Sidney Webb wrote a charming letter, but one which had a little sting in its tail:

"I wish you could persuade G.B.S. to do a piece of serious work, and not pursue this somewhat barren tilting at the family."

G.B.S. came into the theatre on the day when the letter arrived, and I showed it to him. He for once looked grave. Shaw has a tremendous respect for Beatrice Webb's opinion.

"Fanny's First Play" went on and on—month after month, until I resigned myself to that curious monotony of a long run. It was a new sensation not to see managers frowning at the box-office and stage-managers skimping over yards of stuff. Here was all the pleasant extravagance of success. I was tired, but loath to leave it. When the summer came I wrote to Shaw and suggested that we should work right through the summer and that

I should not take a holiday. His reply came, decisive and full of sound sense:

"I am very neurotic and can hardly write. What you say about doing without a holiday is all *nonsense!* The public should have a holiday from perpetual 'Lillah' too. You must not hackney yourself. Just give a turn to the people who love sentimental blondes, and are terrified by dark, queenly ladies. There should always be *two* beauties at a well-regulated theatre, two male and two female—otherwise the thing becomes as dull as a marriage.

"Let the theatre, and go away for a good change.

"I can reserve 'Candida' for a relief piece for you later on, but you would have to take laudanum by the quart to quiet you down for Candida's part.

"My head is unbearably painful. I can write no more.

"G. B. S."

I took my holiday and Evelyn Weeden played my part of Margaret in "Fanny's First Play." When I returned Fanny and Evelyn were still captivating London audiences, and on the play went. We took Fanny, with Evelyn Weeden still playing Margaret, to the Kingsway and they continued to draw full houses even though the theatre was a much larger one.

She played in "Milestones" for nearly two years—until she married and retired from the stage. Her retirement, though a great loss to the stage, as Arnold Bennett declared at the time, had one compensation for me, since it gave me a new and dear friend in the person of her wise and genial husband, Colonel Knight-Bruce.

Our financial success almost overwhelmed Lord Howard de Walden. The money which he had advanced out of kindness and in the hope of encouraging theatrical enterprise was not losing itself but was actually increas-

ing. "Is it possible," he wrote, "that I am to be connected with a theatrical enterprise and not lose all my money?" To such a question the only tactful answer would seem to be "all things are possible."

CHAPTER XI

THE "LIGHTS" OF LONDON

I

I LOOK back on those times when the Court Theatre was in its heyday with feelings of amazement. It seems to me now that the exciting and incessant work of acting and management should have sufficed, and more than sufficed, to fill every moment of my days. Yet it did not. Youth is insatiable for work or play or both, and though I gave myself heart and soul to the theatre, I somehow found time for other activities as well. I cannot pretend that it was my own energy which led me to take active interest in public affairs outside the theatre and enabled me to find time to make friends with and to learn from some of the most interesting people of the period. It was not. The young men and women of that generation were aflame with a fervour for reform; dramatists were reforming the theatre; writers were breaking new ground in literature and some among them, Shaw and Wells for example, were doubling their role by taking a vehement interest in political questions. Enthusiasm was in the air. The times were growing times and I, like so many other youth of those days, caught the infection. Enthusiasm, the vitamin which restores fatigue, bore us all along. When I was not rehearsing the sharp-edged lines of "Man and Superman," I was watching Sidney Webb (Lord Passfield), or Shaw, or some other Fabian, weaving the stuff of their dreams of a Socialist State, or I was throwing myself with passionate eagerness into the tumultuous movement for "Votes for Women," or I was listening to Shaw telling me with glee how he had shut up the Social Democrats by

the simple stratagem of actually reading and digesting Karl Marx. "They talked about him, but I read him." Yet I must confess that often though I listened to the Fabians, I found it difficult fully to understand them. It was not hard to realise that they wanted to do many things which ought to be done; to put hospitals on a State footing; to endow motherhood; to banish poverty; and generally to organise the State instead of leaving it to drift along in the huggermugger way it did then and, in the main, still does.

One rainy day, standing at a window with Sidney Webb, I asked him how the Socialists were going to bring all these great changes about. He pointed to the rain, gentle, steady, incessant, and said in a voice no less gentle: "I want the Socialists to work like that: without noise, without fuss." And then (using another simile): "Under the earth are the burrows of the moles; we must work as they work, unobtrusively, slowly and gradually undermining the existing system until, one day, it subsides." Yet I could never feel sure, in spite of my awe of his vast knowledge and yet vaster industry, that his ideas included all that must be reckoned with in reforming the State. My doubt was fed upon a remark that Sidney Webb made in answer to a question which I put to him: what would the Socialist State do with the lazy and incompetent? Without hesitation and without a smile, he replied: "Make them agricultural labourers!" Somehow I found myself unable to picture the lazy and incompetent, even though directed by Sidney, plying successfully one of the most skilled crafts in the world: driving a straight furrow, setting a quick hedge, swinging the scythe from morning till night with all the loveliness of motion that peasants use, thatching a rick, singling a field of turnips.

Yet no one who was admitted to their circle, which included everybody of the political world of London, could help admiring and loving the Webbs. Industry was their pastime. Sidney, short of stature, with his fine head and beautiful dark eyes, as of a visionary always

doing difficult sums, and Beatrice, his wife, beautiful, commanding, tutorial, but as full of splendid enthusiasm as was Sidney himself. They taught me things precious to know; above all, they made me share their ardent belief that the ills and sufferings of the world are not beyond, but within human remedy, and that if the remedy is to be applied, all our customs, habits and beliefs, no matter how fiercely we cherish them, must be re-examined and, if found wanting, discarded for better ones. It was only when I brooded on the fragile nature of liberty that I found something lacking in these Fabian teachings; for as it seemed to me, liberty is in its very essence something which cannot be meted out by any man to another. Unless he has absolute ownership he cannot possess it at all, and in the Socialist State, as they describe it, liberty was to be not an absolute possession, but a ration. We should all advance in a queue to a sort of political box-office and, after a shrewd scrutiny from the Minister of Liberty looking out from the window, receive, or not, our liberty card, strictly according to his estimate of our deserts, and then we should go mumbling away not knowing where to cash it. Bureaucracy's in his Heaven, all's well with the world!

In these times, another hope also was dawning.

Looking towards Westminster we could see the symbol of the new energetic Liberal power which 1906 had swept into office. In those first days of my interest in politics, I knew none of the new Liberal leaders. But in 1907, I went to a Foreign Office party and, as I entered the room, I saw emerging out of the splendour, the figure of Mr. Asquith (Lord Asquith and Oxford) come smiling towards me. He was Chancellor of the Exchequer. Asquith came across the room, took my hand, and said: "We must be friends. I am delighted at the opportunity." We went out of the big room, away from the bedlam, along passages, until we found ourselves in a room where it was quiet enough to talk. We talked for a full hour, until the party was over. He forgot the politician, and became, for that

hour the brilliant scholar. He forgot he was Chancellor, and was altogether charming. He talked of literature. He knew all Shaw's plays and loved them. He knew all Ibsen's plays and was worried by them. He knew the Bible, a knowledge which now seems, to the detriment of all our literature, to be at a discount. How I wish I could recall the many wise and kindly things he said! But only one phrase comes back to memory, and that because it was one which I have heard him use again and again: "Idealism," he said, "is the deepest realism," and to me, at all events, it reflects something of the poise and temper of his mind. Our friendship which began then lasted all his life; for me it still lasts. Sometimes of an afternoon he would come to my flat in the Adelphi. We read plays and talked about them, and from these pleasant occasions, his image grew more and more clear. Of all men I have known, Asquith most deserved the epithet urbane. Though he could be brusque in manner and severe in his judgments, I never once saw him try to make anyone look small. No undergraduate who dined at his table at The Wharf left that hospitable house without a pleasant feeling of elation, for had not the great man listened to him with a courtesy and interest which proved that he was worth listening to? Asquith loved anecdote, but preferred that it should be of historic vintage. He was wont to ask for chapter and verse for a story told to him; a habit which, as I have sometimes seen, proved embarrassing to the witty man who had been drawing upon his own invention. Asquith was at heart a scholar, and his devotion was given to Oxford. Long years after our first meeting, he asked one who had resigned an Oxford professorship, in order to take up work connected with industry: "How could you do it?" After listening with attention to the explanation, he sighed, and said: "You may be right, but for my part I would rather have been a professor at Oxford than Prime Minister of England." To the worldly this may seem an affectation, I know it was sincere.

Asquith at his ease among his friends had a gentle



Photograph by Daily Mirror Studios.

LILLAH McCARTHY AS "NAN"
in "The Tragedy of Nan," by John Masefield, at the Royalty Theatre in 1908.

humour, a little quizzical, but never cruel. A master of language, he ever disdained those rapier-thrusts at friend or colleague which make so much wit so very pestilent. Asquith loved to talk and tell of bygone things. He would comment, with a chuckle, on the little Latin and less Greek of Cabinet Ministers of these latter days, and contrast it with the scholarship of Ministers of a more ancient time. "The only time any Cabinet of which I was a member ever went to a Division was," he told me, "on the question of the accuracy of a Latin quotation made by one of us. Campbell-Bannerman, the Prime Minister, was momentarily absent from the room. He returned to find us lined up and laughing, in equal numbers on the division. He asked what we were doing, and when told, gave immediately what proved, when authority was consulted, to be the true rendering." This was the only Cabinet secret which Mr. Asquith ever divulged to me. There are some women who seem to possess the ear of all Ministers, and to be the open repository of all State secrets. I was fortunate in being relieved from bearing the burden of such responsibility, and am tempted to wonder sometimes whether the burden, which these others wear so lightly, is indeed so heavy as they proclaim it to be. Asquith's conversation, though it ranged wide and far into the past, had in it never a trace of pedantry. He was, I think, what a University Don ought to be, but so very rarely is: simple, natural, firm and suave. One day, long after the times when we used to meet in London and during his retirement, he came to dinner at my house near Oxford. The dinner was given to bring together Asquith and the Rev. H. J. Bidder, who was then Bursar of St. John's College, Oxford, and who had made and tended with such skill and taste the lovely rock garden in the grounds of the College. They had never met. There were no other guests. Both courtly, both well-informed and both with ardent love for Oxford, they spent a happy evening and no one could have known, from the conversation, that they hated each other's politics like poison. Late in the

evening Asquith said good-bye. I took him to the door, and whilst he was being helped on with his coat, he remarked: "A cheery ruffian, Bidder." When Bidder left, I took him also to the door, and as he heaved his bulky figure into his coat and wrapped the thick woollen muffler about his neck, he observed: "A cheery ruffian, Asquith." Thus each betrayed his admiration for the other, and his disapproval of the other's politics.

In the early days conversation once turned on current politics. It was war-time, and I said to Mr. Asquith: "You will have to have conscription. It's the only way by which you can get the married men to go. They want to, but fear to leave their wives and children. You will have to send them." Then I saw a new Asquith, severe, a man of deep conviction. "No, not while I am Prime Minister." I do not pretend to judge of these high matters, but I could tell that there was a world of careful and deep thought behind this strange judgment. But at the time, I could not help thinking that, in spite of the clearness of his thought, there must be in it something of the limitation which I also thought I saw in Sidney Webb and some of the other Fabians whom I knew. What they had once discovered they must go on always expounding: they are not of those who must go on for ever making new discoveries.

The discoverers; the adventurous-minded, Wells, Lloyd George, Nansen, all flying men, all finding their way by losing it. Asquith, Sidney Webb, sure men, tracing a new way with cautious step or seeking to know the future by appealing to the past. And Shaw, the greatest middleman who ever lived, building a new world out of the crumbling debris of the old. Bringing together, summing up and interpreting the experience of the past, and marrying it with new thoughts whereby may be begotten the new world of the future. The Linnaeus of literature! As the great Swedish naturalist took all the planks and loose stones of knowledge, sawn or hewn by those who went before him, and built a splendid new temple of knowledge, so Shaw. He stands

in the middle-way—between the adventurous-minded and the safe and sure men.

What a world apart they are: Asquith and Lloyd George. Was there ever such a contrast? I suppose I ought to admire the one and dislike the other. I cannot. They are both great Englishmen. The one steady, impassive, might if fate had so willed it, have gone down to history with a glory equal to that of Abraham Lincoln. The other like a flash of lightning, decisive, a seer even though of imperfect vision. Forgotten most by those once vocal in his praise: but forgotten only because they are absent-minded. Only a few months ago I visited Lloyd George at Churt. A Spartan man. To bed every night at ten o'clock: healthy, strong, and full of self-discipline. A master of his fate if ever there was one. Full of happy pride in his garden, though knowing but little of the things that grew there, with still more pride in his potatoes and his apple crop. When I asked him whether he would not like to return to the great place he once held, he tossed back the mane of white hair, his face lit up, but he replied: "No, no, I don't want it any more. I have had enough. I am happy here." It was clear enough that he was happy, and yet. . . .

Asquith and Lloyd George: there can be no greater contrast, and yet both are alike in the grandeur of the way they faced retirement. In all else they are as the poles asunder—the one spontaneous, the other restrained: even in their hours of recreation. To play golf with Asquith was a gentle and decorous exercise, a sort of ritual for the elderly; but to be at Churt on a sunny morning and, intoxicated by the crisp air, to lose restraint and go dancing up to your host returning from inspecting his cherry trees and to see him, caught up by the infection of joy, come with dancing eyes and springing gait to meet you, is to realise that Lloyd George can play the schoolboy just as well as H. G. Wells. He too might, as Wells once did with me, shyly open his suitcase to show the toys he was taking to his grandchildren. Nansen, too, foremost in the ranks of the

adventurous-minded, kept the schoolboy in him all his life. The first time he climbed my stairs was a year or so after he had ceased to be Norwegian Minister in London. Asquith had just left me. Nansen, looking like a Viking, cleaved his way in. The room was small, and chairs toppled over unregarded in his wake. We began to talk about the theatre: Shaw and Ibsen. But within a minute of two, by some unremembered swift transition, Nansen was singing Norwegian folk-songs beside me on the sofa. Then he began to tell me fairy tales, and, presently tales of his adventures in the Arctic. They were so artless and so vivid as to have all the glamour of fairy tales: stories of some other world where magic rules, and where only great adventurous spirits can ever penetrate. The calm and benign air, as of the library, which had filled the room while Asquith was there, was swept, as though by a Polar blast, icy, invigorating. The carpet of my room was a magic carpet, and I was borne away to those new and magical worlds till suddenly I was recalled. I heard the insistent voice of my conscientious self—that part of you that makes you do the things you hate to do—I heard it saying: “I must hurry away and get ready, the Galsworthys are coming to dinner.” “The Galsworthys?” exclaimed Nansen. “I will stay to dinner, too.” He did. The Galsworthys came. I dreaded the moment of the meeting; for the hostess in me doubted whether it could be a success. That hostess part of me feared in her foolishness, that there was little in common between Nansen and Galsworthy. That to bring them together would be as unnatural as to invite the polar and temperate regions to meet one another. But the romantic, wiser side of me knew better. Knew that hostesses are only too often desperately bad judges of the guests they entertain. The one John Galsworthy who, as hostess, I knew: correct, well-groomed, quiet, reserved, with circumspection in his eyes, did not come that evening. He was engaged in adding yet another chapter to his immortal *Comedie Humaine* of the upper

middle classes. But the other did, the adventurous John Galsworthy; the one who had travelled wide and who had discovered Conrad sailing somewhere in the South Seas, and made him write those marvellous stories which brought to us a new romance in the guise of a new realism. They met, they saw, they conquered one another. All through dinner they talked, now of the Scandinavian, now of the Forsyte Saga, whilst Ada Galsworthy and I, carried away by their enthusiasm, listened spellbound. I left them talking, tearing myself away to go to the theatre; but when I returned, there they were, radiantly happy, and talking still. When at last they left, the hostess in me, as is the way with hostesses, preened herself on the success of the party, and, of course, began immediately to explain what she had previously not understood, and what romantic "I" had known all the time. "Galsworthy, my dear," she said, "no less than Nansen, belongs to the adventurous-minded, the discoverers. Adventurers are of divers kinds. There are some who must travel far, and seek adventure in distant lands, and there are some who must stay here with us, deep, yet not narrow, helping us to discover ourselves." "Yes," the romantic "I" replied, "that is what Galsworthy has done. And that is what gives him the great place he holds in the esteem of peoples of other nationalities. They know, better than we do, that he has helped more than anyone else of his time to discover England. We think that he has portrayed only some of us—the people we don't like. They know that he has portrayed all of us, and therefore if we don't like his portraits we had better change our faces."

People who have a twofold personality, like my hostess-self and romantic-self, will not wonder that my immediate response to this lecture to my better half by the half of myself which I care less about made me recall, with a little touch of mischief which Galsworthy himself would have been the first to forgive, an occasion when the proper Galsworthy figured, as is fitting, less romantically. We had walked over the Devon moors,

had grown tired and hungry. We found a farmhouse and asked for tea. It came plenteously, with bowls of cream, and vast pyramids of hot cakes. The farmer and his wife were so kind and appeared so substantial in worldly goods that to offer them money struck Galsworthy as unseemly. The daughter was ironing in the kitchen. We saw her peeping through the half-closed door. She left her iron and came to get a better look at us. Now is the time for discreet largesse. Taking some silver from his pocket, John Galsworthy sidled up to the ironing board to slip the coins under the iron. It was all but red-hot. John dancing, but not with joy! and using language that only his romantic self could sanction. Did I hear the inevitable wag of the party murmur:

“See what perils do environ
Those who meddle with hot iron.”

And so, travelling in wide circles, and taking wider latitudes, I come back to my memories of Asquith, and see in far brighter light than I did before, his splendid qualities of good sense, patience and loyalty which made our friendship so precious, so radiant and so enduring.

I had an example of those virtues when a year or two before the war, the company was invited to No. 10 Downing Street, to play for the King and Queen. We were all suffragettes in those days, and need I say that Ann Whitefield would have made me become one if I hadn't been a suffragette already! I had walked in processions. I had carried banners for Mrs. Pankhurst and the Cause. I had made a mess of the accounts as treasurer of the “Actresses’ Franchise League,” and was only prevented from leading the Society to insolvency by the financial ability of Mr. Pethick-Lawrence; whose kindness and corrections enabled me at last to give a good account of my stewardship. I had made a yet greater mess of public speaking for, without the footlights to protect me, I was lost. Imagine my

elation, therefore, when one day I found myself alone in the Cabinet Room at No. 10. There were the baskets of papers and there was the blotting pad with its large sheet of immaculate white blotting paper, the austere, solid ornaments of the Prime Minister's desk. Fervour for the cause took hold of me. I felt like a Joan of Arc of the ballot-box. Martyrdom or not, the occasion must be seized. I opened my box of grease paints, took out the reddest stick I could find, and wrote across the blotting paper "Votes for Women." I went out of the room exultant.

When the rehearsal for which I had gone to Downing Street was over, Mr. Asquith came to me. We had tea together. He asked: "Why do you think women should have the vote?" By Heaven, I told him! I poured out arguments in no unstinted measure. He greeted them with a quizzical smile which, whilst it did not discourage me, forced me to wonder whether the weight of my arguments was as great as their volume.

We were to play the third act of "John Bull's Other Island" and Barrie's "The Twelve Pound Look." The revolutionary Bernard Shaw was at last to be played before his King and Queen. All went well. Next day Mrs Asquith wrote to me:

"A good many empty sayings go flying about on social occasions where people have been amused and flattered, but I can truthfully say (and you know truth with me is a peculiarity more than a virtue!) that you had a very great and to me unexpected (from the King and Queen, I mean) success last night. Our King and Queen are not without a sense of humour and they both laughed and clapped the whole time. I need hardly say, with the exception of perhaps five or six obliged-to-be people, the rest of the audience were my own friends, and all, as you could see yourself, highly intelligent and *very* appreciative. I want you to send me the account of everything. No money ever repays in this world, but we all must

live. My husband's work is inadequately paid, but I am a very simple person, and I write at once to tell you we shall be proud and happy to pay you all, and I can only add my husband and I thank you very, *very* much. Elizabeth will tell you that, though I have *au fond* a good temper, I get so dreadfully irritable at other people's want of enterprise and resource. I said to the King: 'You will see, Sir, none of those blocks will follow us to the playroom!' and he said: 'Oh! how I suffer from people you can't stir, "blocks" is a mild word to what I use inside my mind.' "Margot Asquith."

This first appearance before the King and Queen at No. 10 Downing Street had an odd sequel, in an experience which I underwent during the run of "Twelfth Night" in the same year. A man wrote to me declaring that he had received a command from Heaven to kill me. I tore the letter up and laughed. He wrote again saying how he intended to kill me. I tore the letter up but did not laugh. Again he wrote saying that his vengeance would be swift and sudden. Terrified, I told my manager and showed him the letter. He saw that the affair was serious, and called in Scotland Yard. It was during Christmas week, I was alone in my flat. They told me I must go about as usual: shadowed and guarded, I must be a bait. How could I go about as usual? Had it not been for the courage of one of my oldest and dearest friends, Evelyn Weeden, who was acting in "Milestones" at the Royalty, I could never have gone on. Every night she came and met me at the stage door, and made me walk with some show of composure back to my flat, and as we walked, there echoed always behind the slow footfall of the detective: to my fearsome ear all too slow to stop the furtive rush of the desperate man intent to take my life. One night when we reached the flat a skylight leading to the roof was wide open. I stood frozen to the ground, daring neither to go on nor turn back.

But Evelyn was of less timorous stuff. She tucked up her dress, climbed the roof, hunted everywhere, but found no sign. She came down. We rushed to her room, dragged her mattresses to mine, bolted the door, barricaded it, and waited and watched till dawn.

A day or two afterwards, the lunatic, tired of tracking me, turned his attention upon the King. He was caught outside Buckingham Palace, posting a fantastic letter to his Sovereign.

I was so ill afterwards that I went away to Partenkirchen to rest before the trial in which I had to give evidence against the man for threatening the life of the King. I do not think I have ever been so sharply aware of change of scene in my life. One night, walking fearfully near the Adelphi Arches, in the yellow gas-light, peering into the shadows, with a detective following at my heels: two days after, waking in Partenkirchen, with the white mountains framed in my bedroom, the soft snow falling, the Tyrolean peasants, bright-coloured as flowers. I was so exalted that I went out and walked down the valley and up the hills as far as Oberammergau. In a week I was back in London, helping the law to deal with the poor, demented fellow who had flattered me by seeking my death, along with the death of the King.

II

By 1912, Mr. Asquith and I had become good friends. He used to call my stairs the "ascent to Pisgah," and would often climb them during the half-hour he spared himself in the afternoon, and would sit and talk and read with me. Sometimes I went down to The Wharf, his country house near Oxford. One day I made the journey with him, feeling rather crestfallen. Margot Asquith had invited me for the week-end. She had already gone down to the Wharf. I was to lunch quietly with Asquith at No. 10, and then motor down with him. He had a quick eye for clothes, and I always liked to please him: to know that a colour or a new

fashion excited his admiration. A week or so before the lunch with him, I had seen Lady Desborough with a new coat and skirt. We women were catching the new passion for realism and simplicity and, just as the tree-trunks and thrones and pretty scenery were being swept away from the stage, so frills and prettiness were being shorn off women's dresses.

I thought nothing would please Asquith so much as my arriving to lunch alone with him in one of the new coats and skirts. With the memory of Lady Desborough's in my mind, I went off to my tailor, and, on the Saturday morning, opened a box and lifted my first—and last—coat and skirt from its bed of tissue paper. I was to meet Mr. Asquith at the garden gate of No. 10. When he saw me, he said: "Good Heavens, what *have* you got on?" He grumbled all the way through lunch. When I returned to London on Monday morning, I promptly sold the wretched thing; no more coat and skirt for me!

Asquith loved beautiful clothes in a woman, and was almost vain about the appearance of those who sat near him. But he was absolutely free from vanity in regard to himself. On one occasion I was sitting next to him at dinner at The Wharf. We had been talking of the older theatre, of Mary Anderson and of Lillie Langtry. We spoke of the colour of their hair and I asked him, looking at his then white head, what colour his own hair had been. He put his hand up to his hair, as if he had never thought of it.

"What do you mean?" he asked. "Well," I answered, "was it red like Beb's?" (his son). "Oh no, it wasn't red, it must have been some sort of brown, I am not certain."

I suppose Mr. Asquith and his wife were the most astonishing pair in Edwardian and early Georgian society. People are afraid of Margot Asquith, but they never ignore her, even though she may not reciprocate the attention they bestow. She fascinates alike those

who love her and those who do not. Her energy is overwhelming. In this, husband and wife appeared vastly different in the eyes of their guests at The Wharf. In the morning, the Prime Minister would walk leisurely, or sit in his garden with the newspapers. In the afternoon, he would drive, perhaps to Blueberry, which he loved, or to the magnificent church at Dorchester, every detail of which he knew and of the history of which he would talk with pious regard for the past. After tea, he would play with his grandchildren, the children of his daughter, Lady Bonham Carter. They lived next door to The Wharf. Asquith loved children and understood them.

Margot's Sundays were more strenuous. She would play golf or tennis all the morning. After lunch found the bridge-table set. The less adept of the guests could play where they wished, but for the devotees there was set apart a room specially decorated and furnished for bridge. The door was shut: silence fell upon the house. Tea time came, but bridge knows no respite. The dinner gong sounded the temporary release of the prisoners, and lucky was he who was privileged to sit by Margot. His would be the unique good fortune of eating a good meal in silence whilst listening to the wittiest woman in London.

Once, so it is said, Margot gave a party in London: a big party. She received the guests with graciousness, set them spinning into the rhythm of pleasure and then retired to an upper room to play bridge.

Next day, a well-meaning, but tactless woman fluttered up to her in a restaurant and said: "Oh, Lady Asquith, I was at your party last night . . ." "Thank God I wasn't," answered Margot, and moved on.

Mr. Asquith's interest in the theatre never waned, even with the pressure of affairs while he was Prime Minister. The most graceful mark of his friendship and the most sincere proof of his interest, came during the Coronation Year. I have already written of the performance we gave at No. 10, Downing Street, before

the King and Queen. The story of how it all came about is interesting in itself, because it shows the Prime Minister in a happy and kindly light.

Among the festivities at the Coronation was Beerbohm Tree's Gala performance at His Majesty's. One morning I opened the newspaper and read aghast the list of his chosen plays. There was not one modern play! Galsworthy, Shaw, Barrie and Masefield had been ignored. Whether I played in them or not did not matter so much. I had appeared in all their plays. I had seen the new playwrights come into their own in the theatre, but I felt that a celebration of the new King should also be a celebration of the new dramatists. I wrote to Mr. Asquith and told him so. I asked him to bring influence to bear on Tree to include some of the living playwrights. It was too late, and of course, the Prime Minister could not very well commit himself any further.

Then the tongues became active. It was known that I had championed the living playwrights and that I had tried to get Tree to include them. The easy comment was that I had done it because I wanted to appear myself. Unkindness is always so candid and so cunning. It was not so. But that does not matter. Margot, ever large-hearted and quick to see the rights of things, sent for me as she said "to have a little business talk." The upshot was that the company was asked to play at Downing Street, and so it came about that the living playwrights had their place in the Coronation Year Celebrations. Asquith arranged it primarily in their honour but also as a personal compliment to me. When he told me so, I was ready to believe him, but when Margot also told me, I knew that it was true, for Margot beats George Washington at his own game.

There were, of course, long intervals during which I did not see the Prime Minister: but true friendship knows no intervals. The political events of 1915 were already casting their shadows. In October of that year Mr. Asquith wrote to me;

Friday night
8 Dec 16
Dearest Lillah -
What a beautiful
letter you have
written to me!
It is all ~~very~~ very
hazy, but I
love the most
wonderful tributes
of love & confidence

from the people
I love for most -
of whom, I need
not tell you, you
are one of the
most prized.
We must try to
meet some time
next week: it
might be easier

" I don't think I much want any book, even Masfield's, about any phase of the war. It is always with me, at every hour of the day and at most hours of the night. What I want to read is something which takes me millions of miles away from it.

"This sounds ungracious and ungrateful, but it isn't. I should so much like to have an hour with you alone, somewhere, some time. . . .

"H.H.A."

The next letter was in answer to mine, sent to him on the day of the fall of the Coalition:

"Dearest Lillah,

"What a beautiful letter you have written to me! It is all very tragic, but I have the most wonderful tributes of love and confidence from the people I care for most. Of whom, I need not tell you, you are one of the most prized. We must try to meet sometime next week: it ought to be easier now. We shall probably be turning out of this house next week. . . . Do you still think that I ought to climb the steep ascent of Pisgah? Bless you dear."

Five days afterwards he wrote again. In the intervening days the glory had departed. The doors of No. 10 were opening to receive the new Prime Minister. Younger and louder voices were raised in Westminster. From the quiet of his country house, The Wharf, he wrote again:

"Dearest Lillah,

"It was a great joy to me to get your very sweet letter. So long as I do not lose the love of my real friends (of whom you are one by every title), I don't mind the rest. 'They have said . . . Let them say.'"

CHAPTER XII

SHAKESPEARE AT THE SAVOY

I 1911-1914

THE years 1911-1914 were wonderful years for me. My long and varied apprenticeship to the stage was over. I was old in theatrical experience though still young in years. I was caught up in the hazards of management, often sharing the responsibility of two theatres, whilst playing in a third. Fortune smiled.

"Fanny's First Play" turned out to be Bernard Shaw's first play which won great success. It made money. Arnold Bennett's "The Great Adventure" was also successful, and, more wonderful still, "Twelfth Night," far from spelling ruin, attracted large audiences and enjoyed a very good run—for Shakespeare! "Fanny's First Play" ran for 600 performances; "The Great Adventure" for two and a half years, and "Twelfth Night"—take heed, o ye timid among managers—ran for over 100 performances. The profits made on these plays were spent on other good plays, but the London theatre-going public of those days seemed to be temperate in its artistic tastes. It did not like too much of a good thing, and accordingly, most of these other ventures lost money. The plays which we produced included "A Winter's Tale," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," Ibsen's "Master Builder" and "The Wild Duck," and "The Voysey Inheritance." Masfield's "Nan" was revived, and so were "The Doctor's Dilemma" and other of Shaw's plays. We produced Maurice Baring's "Double Game" and Galsworthy's "Eldest Son" and revived Galsworthy's "The Silver Box."

The guardian angel of finance was Lord Howard de Walden. From the day when I went to see him in Belgrave Square until the last hour of my management, he poured his material generosity and constructive taste into my work. The man who gives financial support to theatrical enterprise may do so from one or more of several motives. He may be a rich man, with a love of the theatre. He may be sanguine enough to hope that there is money in the theatre. He may himself be an artist and feel the camaraderie which artists have for one another. Lord Howard de Walden, I am convinced, bestowed his patronage upon the theatre on the principle of *noblesse oblige* as one who recognises the obligations of wealth to keep alive and cultivate the love of art.

Then came a Shakespeare season at the Savoy theatre which brought me the happiest experience which an actress can have: the playing in company with a splendid cast and the enthusiasm of those whose judgment is as sure as it is generous.

Albert Rutherston and Norman Wilkinson of Four Oaks never did finer work than in designing costumes and scenery for the plays. There were many changes from the star-actor-manager's way of producing Shakespeare. The Elizabethan tradition was restored and the Apron stage was used. The first play was "A Winter's Tale" in which I played Hermione. Shaw wrote:

" . . . the spectators were so utterly extinguished by the splendour of the costumes that they might as well wear jerseys and tam-o'-shanters as try to make fashion-plates of themselves in the ordinary, common way."

Letters of appreciation poured in upon us, in spite of the fact that our popularity never reached the suburbs, where so many letters seem to come from.

Margot Asquith, always the first to appreciate beautiful things and always helpful in her criticism, wrote:



LILLAH McCARTHY AS "ANN WHITEFIELD"
in "Man and Superman," by George Bernard Shaw, at The Court Theatre
in 1905

"I have one criticism to make of your 'Winter's Tale,' which has been made to me by several people: the hoydenish, noisy and not very pretty dance lasts far too long, and I think perhaps you should look a little older as, obviously, Hermione could not have been embalmed. The answer to this is that Perdita is like a little girl of 15, but after all, she was going to be married.

"I never saw anything more beautiful, or a finer scene, than your trial, but the dance I felt a little trackless and very long. I am a good judge of a tired London female who goes out to theatres with tired people, ambassadors (who know nothing of their own countries) and politicians who sweat for their own countries, but I've no idea of letting my husband off as he *wants* to go and I'll tell you when he comes, as he would like to see you after. My beloved Elizabeth is learning music in Munich and I miss her terribly."

Laurence Binyon wrote:

"I expected to enjoy, but I was enchanted. It really was a revelation—of Shakespeare. Everyone who has seen this 'Winter's Tale' must feel the customary presentation insupportable: and I hope before long that we shall see the last of it. You have done a great thing. O, the joy of the briskness and continuity of it all! The relief to have no footlights, no beastly tootlings between the acts, no drawling of voices and dragging of feet! It must electrify people to find that a Shakespeare play makes sense when not gutted of vital parts. Hermione in the trial was most touching and beautiful. I remember Forbes-Robertson's Leontes well, but I think Ainley's is finer. Now I hunger to see 'Othello' and 'Macbeth' done in this swift, essential way. It would be overwhelming, absolutely."

Edmund Gosse wrote:

"The whole setting and performance of the play is

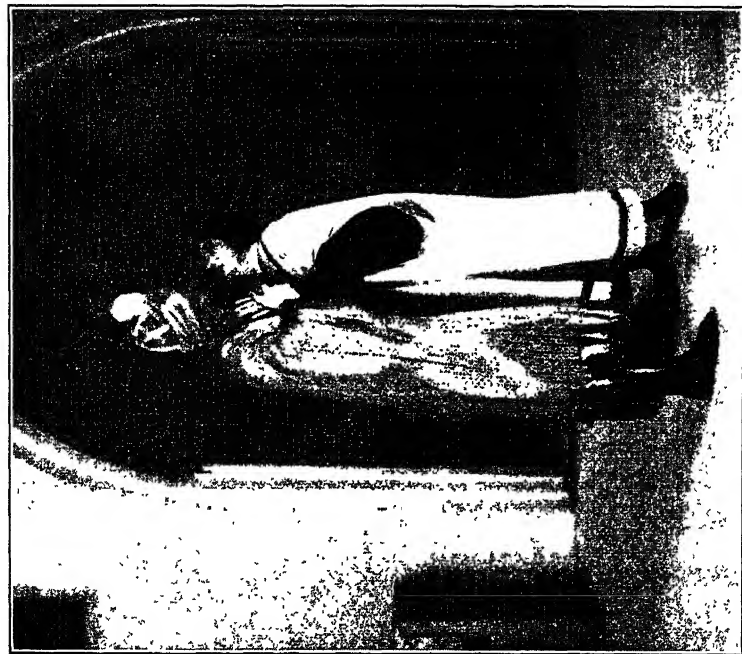
exquisite and, without ever seeming absurd, wholly original. I was very much struck by your fidelity to the text, which, particularly in the first act, is more obscure than almost anywhere else in Shakespeare. It is not the obscurity of corrupt text, but the congestion of the mind of Shakespeare, in a tremendous hurry to say a vast number of things—cutting language down to its elements. You are extremely right in taking all this so fast, for although no audience could possibly understand every line (however slowly given) you put us in Shakespeare's mood, and let us essentially understand by running off the lines so rapidly. We thought Mr. Ainley particularly excellent, and his Leontes is quite a feat of memory as well as of acting. How curious it is that men have always a better sense of verse than women."

II 1912

I learned in these years how incalculable are the prospects which attend upon the production of plays. "A Winter's Tale"—that lovely moving story—welcomed though it was by the critics and other people of artistic temperament, failed to attract the general public and had to be taken off after a short run. Undaunted, we began rehearsals for "Twelfth Night" with Henry Ainley as Malvolio, Dennis Neilson-Terry as Sebastian, and Evelyn Millard as Olivia.

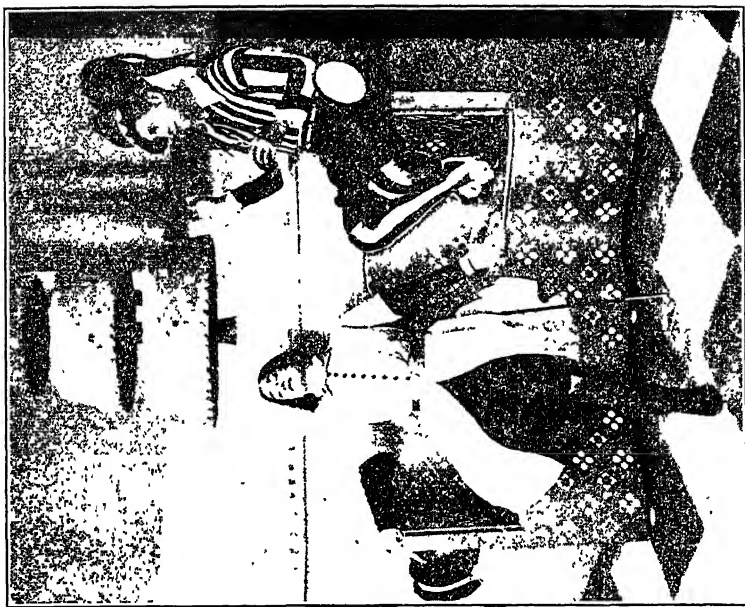
The production was most beautiful. There was probably never a time in the history of the theatre when so many artists of genius lent their talents to theatrical production. Chief among them were Charles Ricketts, Albert Rutherston and Norman Wilkinson who designed costumes and scenery for "Twelfth Night": one of the most beautiful productions I have ever seen.

As Viola I had to solve one of the most difficult problems which can confront any actress who has in her an overpowering love of poetry. Viola must be mannish. Is she not disguised as a boy! Viola speaks the most exquisite lines:



Photograph by Daily Mirror Studios.

ARTHUR WONTNER AS "ORSINO" LILLAH MCCARTHY AS "VIOLA" in "Twelfth Night," by William Shakespeare, at The Savoy Theatre in 1912.



Photograph by Daily Mirror Studios.

LILLAH MCCARTHY AS "VIOLA", HAYDN COFFIN AS "FESTE" in "Twelfth Night," by William Shakespeare, at The Savoy Theatre in 1912. Designs by Norman Wilkinson, of Four Oaks.

"A blank, my lord, She never told her love,
But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud,
Feed on her damask cheek: she pined in thought
And, with a green and yellow melancholy,
She sat like patience on a monument
Smiling at grief. Was not this love indeed?
We men may say more, swear more: but indeed
Our shows are more than will; for still we prove
Much in our vows, but little in our love."

Duke: "But died thy sister of her love, my boy?"

Viola: "I am all the daughters of my father's house,
And all the brothers too: and yet I know
not."

My poetic sense must have got the better of my dramatic discretion. During rehearsal I must have stressed too much the poetry of the part, and by so doing let Viola betray the woman in her. The producer would not have it so. I must play the man—that is the youth that Viola pretends to be. My diary of those days tells me that after rehearsal "I went to bed and quietly rehearsed all he had told me of Viola. Dined alone. Packed house, all the critics invited in front. I played *well*—quite satisfied. Thank God. Viola is a big strain played as a leading man, which the producer insists on."

This entry in my diary also seems to show that I managed at last to make Viola steer clear of the shallows of sentimentality and safely pass the hard rocks of extreme mannishness. The letters which John Masefield and Charles Ricketts wrote to me after my performance of Viola give me other ground for believing that I was successful in this difficult task of artistic seamanship.

Charles Ricketts wrote of the performance:

"It showed thought, beauty, and was marked by a cleanliness of movement which places it many miles away from the sentimentality and self-consciousness

with which it is usually rendered. I thought the whole production much the best Shakespearean revival I have yet seen, not excepting Irving's better production. "The Winter's Tale" was almost in the front line, this is beyond it."

John Masefield wrote:

"I would like to thank you for the new and singular pleasure your very beautiful Viola gave us. It was a most gentle and gracious performance, full of an exceeding beauty of speech which quite carried us away. One of the delights in the delightful evening was to see the whole house thinking of you as we thought, touched, moved and enthusiastic at a thing new in our experience."

III 1912

In June of 1912 I was seeking another theatre. I confessed my need to Shaw and, unfortunately the time of my doing it coincided with that of his infatuation for Mrs. Patrick Campbell, who was also looking for a theatre. A little man in such a case would have shown his littleness, but Shaw is a big man. His reply proves it: "You will have to look sharp, or she will snatch the 'Queen's' out of your very jaws. Never did I make a greater sacrifice for friendship than in not warning her."

Then presently comes Shaw's delightful confession:

"Though I entered on the business with the most insolent confidence in my superiority to a dozen such Delilahs, I fell head over ears in love with her—violently and exquisitely in love—before I knew that I was thinking about anything but business. All yesterday I could think of nothing but a thousand scenes of which she was the heroine and I the hero. And I am on the verge of 56. There has never been anything so ridiculous, or so delightful, in the history of the world. On Friday we were together for an hour;

My dear Lillah,

I would like to thank you for the
new & singular pleasure your very beautiful
Viola gave us. It was a most gentle &
gracious performance, full of an exceeding
beauty of speech which quite carried us away.
One of the delights in the delightful evening
was to see the whole house thinking of you as
we thought, touched, moved & enthusiastic at
a thing new in our experience.

With love from Len.

John

JL

we visited a lord, we drove in a taxi; we sat on a sofa in Kensington Square; and my years fell from me like a garment. I was in love for very nearly 35 hours; and for that be all her sins forgiven her!

"To-day Richard is himself again: and this word Love, which greybeards call divine, be resident in men like one another and not in me: I am myself alone (William). All the same, if she gets at Butt before Tuesday, she will butt him no butts, but hang the theatre to her apron-strings like the kitchen scissors. Your chance is her dislike of negotiation with sordid syndicalists.

"Now if she can seduce me so easily, what chance has Frohman against her with Barrie? His virtue will be as wax, and melt in his own fire."

I do not know the Stella Patrick Campbell of gossip and story: the woman of brilliant and somewhat merciless wit. Of course I know the brilliant Stella—brilliant no less in private life than on the stage—but the Stella Patrick Campbell whom I know best is the large-hearted and generous woman who when she comes round to congratulate a fellow actress forgets to talk about herself and does whole-heartedly and warm-heartedly congratulate her. The Stella I know is kind. I learned to know her at the time when she was rehearsing Shaw's "Pygmalion." She was to play Eliza Dolittle and showed me the largeness of her nature by coming down to my country house at Stanstead to go through the part with me. Who but a generous woman could have written the letter which she sent to me after her visit.

"Lillah dear,

"I am tormented by the memory of that spilt tea upon your couch. I send you an old Japanese cloak to throw over it and remind you of my grief. Oh dear me! I wish you were playing Eliza—Joey [this was her pet name for G. B. Shaw] is almost broken under the misery of my old-fashioned ways, my brainlessness and

general incapacity, and he longs for you most terribly. I think you must be an angel, and I send you profound admiration with my love. Sunday was a happy day for me.

“Stella.”

The last time I saw Stella on the stage was when she was playing the Matriarch and then I could admire once again the amazing breadth of her genius. She *was* a matriarch—all possessive greediness for everything pertaining to the family over which she exercises her matriarchal sway: nothing mean about it nor domineering either—natural serene possessiveness. An embracing octopus greed which enfolds and holds in its soft arms all the family possessions from the family honour to the family ham-bone or leg of mutton which she appropriates and rolls up into a newspaper parcel.

IV

A month after Shaw's confession of his surrender to the charms of Mrs. Pat. when his chivalry made him refrain from telling her that I was looking for a theatre, the St. James's Theatre became available. The hot days of August were approaching. The first play produced was Shaw's new play “Androcles and the Lion.”

Whilst the play was in manuscript he brought “Androcles and the Lion” and read it to me. I was deeply impressed by it; its fun was more spontaneous than in any of his previous plays. Of course Shaw's reading is so perfect that it casts a glamour over everything he reads aloud. His voice is under perfect control, and his unerring dramatic sense, which finds expression on every occasion even in private life, gives to any play that he reads a vividness so dazzling that even if it were a bad play it would seem to be a masterpiece.

Shaw is himself dramatic; he thinks dramatically. He sees the world dramatically. He starts to tell his first adventure with talkie films. He is a talkie film. He

recounts his litigations and lo! he is at once judge and jury, plaintiff and defendant. Only once, so far as I know, has his dramatic sense failed to impress. He was coming to stay with me at Boar's Hill. The day before his visit I chanced to meet Robert Bridges, the late Poet Laureate and a near neighbour, in an Oxford shop—a draper's shop. I was buying some cloth of silver for a dress. Bridges bent his great height over me and whispered, "I wish we were buying silver cloth. We always buy grey alpaca." I recollected that the Shaws were coming and asked Bridges to lunch. "No, thank you," he said, "I never go out now." "What a pity," I replied, "the Bernard Shaws will be staying with us." "I'll come," said Dr. Bridges. He came. Shaw and Bridges talked all through lunch. After lunch we sat in a sunny loggia—it was a warm October day—all except Bridges who stretched himself prone on some rugs on the floor. Shaw went on talking. Bridges closed his eyes. The theme was the extraordinary way in which the dramatist uses words identical with those that people would use in similar circumstances in real life. Shaw gave an example: "When I wrote 'Major Barbara,' the characters were modelled on people I knew. The likenesses were unmistakable, and therefore I was anxious to make sure that no words used in the play could hurt the originals. I read the play to an old, dear friend of the family. All went well till I came to the lines: 'Never call me Mother again.' 'Oh,' said she, 'you must not say that for those are the very words used by . . . (the character copied in the play), and used in tragic circumstances.'"

Shaw paused. Bridges opened his eyes, "remarkable coincidence," he said, and closed his eyes again. The dramatic spell was broken.

On another, later occasion, Shaw read "St. Joan" to us. He read with such dramatic force that the poignancy of the drama overcame me. When he had finished the Fourth Act, I was trembling with emotion. It was the Inquisition scene, and Shaw's voice became hard and terrible as he read Joan's lines:

"If you tear me limb from limb until you separate my soul from my body, you will get nothing out of me beyond what I have told you. . . . You promised me my life, but you lied!"

The scene was so mighty ; I was cold with the terror which he had put into it—"I can't bear it. It is too cruel," I said to him. "The audience will go mad." He turned over the pages of his manuscript and continued: "Sit still, and listen."

Then the story moved from the agony of the Inquisition into the calm of the Epilogue. It was some time before I could pay any attention to it. I felt the terrors of Joan's story so much within me that I wanted to play the part. It seemed to become part of me as he read. His voice softened as he read, swiftly, rightly, and the dream-like spirit of the Epilogue soothed the pain of the great scene.

On that Sunday morning of April, 1912, after I had heard him read "Androcles and the Lion," I had no doubt in my mind as to whether the play was good or bad. I recognised it as a great play and to that opinion I still hold.

Everyone knows the story. It tells of Christian martyrs who resist the law of Caesar. The play opens with a delicious scene in which Androcles—a Greek tailor—a sentimental little fellow and by no means brave—is taking the thorn out of the lion's paw. The operation over, off dance Androcles and the Lion together whilst Androcles' wife looks on and chides: "Oh, you coward, you haven't danced with me for years. And now you go off dancing with a great brute that you haven't known ten minutes. . . ."

Were there no more than the fun and mischief which Shaw with masterly hand introduces into the play, "Androcles and the Lion" would not be a drama; it would be only a brilliant farce—and one of doubtful taste. There is more. There is a resolute purpose in the play. In most, although not all, of Shaw's previous plays

the dramatist is preaching from relatively parochial texts. In *Androcles* he takes an imperial theme. *Androcles* is a fierce indictment of imperialism: not of other nations' imperialism; but of the imperialism of Britain. There's the rub. The dark background which is essential to the showing up of fun shows up something which Shaw regards as pernicious, but which most people hold as precious and almost sacred. It is no use running away from truth: it must be faced. Shaw's truth spelled untruth to the vast majority of people who went to see "*Androcles and the Lion*." How then could they settle down to enjoy the play! Citizens of the Empire first, artists second—if at all: all they could do was what they did, protest, pour ridicule on the play and stay away.

"*Androcles*" was produced on the 1st September, 1913, and perished miserably under the storm of ridicule.

It is interesting to record that the abuse did not come from the clergy whom Shaw had given cause for wrath. Men among the clergy showed a large-mindedness which proved that the Pauline lesson of Charity had been learned by some at least of the preachers. The Rev. Thomas Yates said:

"As to the accusation of irreverence, those who make it seek artificiality instead of human nature in the early Christians. I protest that I prefer this direct challenge to the power and reality of the Christian religion to that sickly exploitation of Christianity for theatrical purposes of which '*The Sign of the Cross*' was a nauseous example."

I am English—at all events part of me is. I love England with all my heart. I cannot pretend to know whether Shaw is a "little Willie" and that all others are out of step but he. But I can do what those who condemned the play could not: look at "*Androcles and the Lion*" from the dispassionate point of view of the artist. Judged in that way it is a great play: perfect in its technique, its humour supple, mordant in its satire and possessed of the essential dramatic quality.

Time, long time—one hundred years—perhaps several centuries will have to pass, before the world is in a state to make up its mind whether those who condemned the play were right or wrong. They are right if Time decides that Shaw satirised, as they think he did, things that are lovely and of good repute. They are wrong if Time decides that the object of his satire deserved what he gave it. Yet even though Time were to prove them right in condemning the play as a travesty of truth they would still be wrong to have condemned "Androcles" as a play. As a work of art it will live as long as our language lives and it may be that five centuries hence when "Androcles and the Lion" is in the Repertory of every theatre in every town in England people will wonder what all the pother was about in those far-off days when passions ran so high and burst forth so furiously whenever a playwright dared to say things that people were not used to hearing.

Whatever the judgment of posterity may prove to be, there can be no doubt of the judgment of the present—that is of 1913. It was emphatic. It was harsh. There are of course, critics who come to a play prepared in advance to damn it. Malvern, 1932: the first performance of Barry Jackson's production of Shaw's "Too True To Be Good." A covey of critics comes circling through the skies. The aeroplane bringing them lands and they alight. One, a bird of ill-omen! speaks blithely to a fellow critic: "I'm going to bash Shaw," he says. But that sort of critic doesn't count or kill. He is as rare as his remark is priceless. That kind can't kill plays. No, it was the honest critic and it was honest criticism that helped to destroy "Androcles."

Shaw felt the adverse criticisms very acutely: the anger which he expressed shows how very human he is. "Have you seen to-night's *Pall Mall Gazette*?" he wrote. "I see no prospect of anyone (except myself) kicking the British public into good manners. I shall peg away until the theatre is as silent as the grave."

There was however one solace in the hour of our

failure. It was a poet who gave it me. John Masefield sent me a copy of his new poem "The Daffodil Fields" and with it these verses inscribed "The Morning after Lavinia":

"Slowly it loitered past the shivering weeds
Into a mightier water—thence its course
Became a pasture where the Salmon feeds,
Wherein no bubble tells its humble source,
But the great waves go rolling, and the horse
Snorts at the bursting waves and will not drink,
And the great ships go outward, bubbling to the
brink.

Seaward with men upon them, stretched in line
Handling the halliards to the ocean's gates
Where checking windfalls fill the air with brine
And all the ocean opens: then the mates
Cry, and the sunburnt crew no longer waits
But sings triumphant, and the topsail fills
To this old tale of woe among the daffodils."

Lavinia, the part I played in "Androcles," is the most human of all the characters. It is she who says, "I am not good always. Only at moments," and this she says whilst awaiting persecution.

Recollections of comic moments during the production of the play help to soften the sorrow which I shall always feel at the failure of "Androcles." The playing of the Lion offered a pretty problem for Shaw. Neither Shaw nor I knew anything about lions or their ways; so off we went to the Zoo on a sunny August morning. I had been told that lions like eau-de-Cologne and therefore provided myself with a bottle-full and several old handkerchiefs as well. The keeper took us into the back of the cage. The lion roared. Shaw talked gently to it. The lion roared louder still. I saturated a handkerchief with eau-de-Cologne and threw it between the bars of the cage. The lion sniffed, sneezed and all Regent's Park

echoed with its roaring. "E's never roared like that before," said the keeper, looking reproachfully at Bernard Shaw. The lion tore the handkerchief to ribbons and threw the pieces in G.B.S.'s face: a British lion!

There was a jaguar in a cage near-by: I tried the eau-de-Cologne on him. The jaguar sniffed, began to purr and carried the handkerchief off to his bed. He sniffed again, purred again, rolled over on his bed playing with the handkerchief and purring all the time. I must be wrong about the sex—surely it must have been a female jaguar!

We went back to rehearsals of "Androcles" and told Edward Silwood, who was to play the Lion; but he knew all about lions. Edward Silwood had been on the stage for sixteen years without ever speaking a word—he was a stage menagerie in his gifted self—had played the part of a gorilla for 2,000 performances, and played the parts of cats, dogs, monkeys, lions and wolves times galore. He used to rehearse the Lion in "Androcles" by roaring on the roof of the theatre and needed no eau-de-Cologne to make him roar loud enough. A stage carpenter put the finishing touch by making him roar into a lamp chimney.

V

Shaw's letters, some of which I have already quoted, give a vivid idea of the infinitude of pains that he took over every detail of these productions. He worked as hard as man can work and also took care that everybody connected with the play did the same. When we revived "The Doctor's Dilemma" in the beginning of 1914, I must have relaxed during the performance: fallen short of Shaw's idea of how the part should be played. I print his letter because it shows not only the lynx-eyed vigilance of the man; but also his sure dramatic sense.

"I saw the 'Dilemma' yesterday. I thought the climax of the Epilogue quite unintelligible. I sounded

Mrs. Campbell and Viola Tree on the subject and found that they hadn't the slightest idea of what happens to Jennifer; so I concluded I was right. You have always softened it to an extent that has puzzled me. But now you have softened it out of existence. What I call the climax is Jennifer's discovery that Ridgeon deliberately murdered Dubedat. The dramatic effect is built up rather elaborately, because there is first a misunderstanding and then a discovery. When Ridgeon first says 'I killed him,' the audience knows that he means 'I murdered him'; but Jennifer thinks that her own frankness and sincerity have at last conquered his vanity, and that what he means is 'Yes, yes; I own up. I confess I was a duffer and made a mess of the case.' And on this she is delighted and forgives him.

"So far, you seem to understand the scene clearly. What I think you miss is the force of the revulsion of feeling when she makes the appalling discovery that Louis was actually deliberately murdered. The point may be a little difficult because I have not done it in my usual way with a single stroke. She has to arrive at the truth by arguing about the medicines, being a little stupid and off the track at first, because the truth is so inconceivable and so wildly remote from her first misunderstanding. But when the revelation does come, it really ought to be a blinding one. It has to be done on the line 'It is only dawning on me, oh! oh! you MURDERED him.' I think you try to get this effect on the soft tack instead of on the explosive one. That, of course, is often a very good way of pulling off a big effect; but in this case it misses fire. Also, the line goes wrong. The repeated exclamation which is put there to enable you to build up the final thunderclap becomes quite senseless. It does not belong to the soft way of doing it.

"Next time just try the effect of letting yourself go on it for all you are worth, and keep up the transport of horror and incredulous amazement until you

get his reply to your threat to kill him, which will let you down easily.

"I hope the above is intelligible. I am prostrate with a blazing headache and am really not fit to write at all.

"Yours ever,

"G. Bernard Shaw."

Some day when a plain sensible man undertakes to write the life of Shaw—and nobody else can do it—he will make a sober picture of this great man. It will be like a Rembrandt. It will show the ardent strivings which have led him to his goal and the serenity which these strivings have at last brought to him. Life has been cruel and has been kind to Shaw—as it is to all of us. He has had to make his way from nowhere with no advantages save those of an indomitable will, high courage and sheer honesty of mind: handicapped of course by a brilliant wit. Although always abstemious, he was, as a youth, too intent in looking after his career to look after himself. When he married, Shaw was badly run down, but Charlotte, his wife, changed all that. How she has done it is a mystery to those who do not know her, for Charlotte almost always seems to let him go his own way: but the way G.B.S. goes is her way—at all events in large matters.

The Shaws were staying with us not so very long ago. He was just finishing his book on "Socialism for Ladies." One of us asked him if, after dinner, he would tell us what new ideas he had on socialism. "Of course I will," said Shaw. But after dinner his mood had changed. He did not want to talk about socialism. Then Charlotte said very gently: "G.B.S.! You promised to talk to us about socialism and you must." Without further demur he did. Shaw's wonderful health, sustained by all sorts of farinaceous fare and by his abstemiousness, and his untiring energy owe much to his common-sense way of looking at things. Though he scoffs at science, he has a scientific mind, and though he laughs at scientific experi-

ments, he has himself found out by experiment what food agrees with him. But his health and vigour owe much to the care, constant although it seems so casual, with which Charlotte watches over him. She seems unobservant; but misses nothing, and her care is exercised without constraint.

VI 1914

Early in 1914, I appeared in the most beautiful production of my career. Many people still remember "A Midsummer Night's Dream" at the Savoy Theatre. I played Helena. Ever since the Wilson Barrett days, I had played severe parts in more or less severe plays. When I played Mercia in Oxford, in my 'teens, an undergraduate threw himself into the river—shallow youth: shallow water—for love of me. Flowers came, jewels and letters. I know now why it was that Mercia used to break so many hearts: to have known it then would have broken mine. I have found the clue. It is the golden thread of Ariadne. During the long and lonely years which passed after the days of Mercia, the young and romantic never told their love. Then, suddenly, the sun of adoration shone again and lo! the clue was clear. Those intervening years were dark because my hair was dark. Mercia had auburn hair. Helena's was pale gold: fresh from Clarkson, in a cardboard box delivered daily. One such golden thread was all that Ariadne had, I had a wig full. Did it not capture Ben Greet!

As the Witch, I could cast a spell upon my audience; but they never loved me. As Ann, or another of Shaw's women characters, I could win the approbation of the critics and the applause of the audience: but they never loved me. But as Helena in a golden wig, I was again beloved. Presents showered upon me. Nice chocolates, bad verses, flowers, bracelets. My dresser, Kate, the truest and dearest friend I ever had, used to eat the chocolates and leave me to read the verses. We shared the bracelets, but I kept the flowers.



Photograph by Dainty Mirror Studios.

LILLAH MCCARTHY AS "HELENA"
in "A Midsummer Night's Dream," by
William Shakespeare, at The Savoy Theatre in 1914
Design by Norman Wilkinson of Four Oaks.



Photograph by Dainty Mirror Studios.

LILLAH MCCARTHY AS "HERMIONE"
in "The Winter's Tale," by William Shakespeare,
at The Savoy Theatre 1912
Design by Albert Rutherford.

All these marks of adoration did me good. It was delightful to have them, and chastening to know that it was the wig that did it. It was like carrying brother Dan on my shoulders. My curls confided to me that popularity is no proof of talent. Hard work makes the actress.

The Savoy production of "The Midsummer Night's Dream" was a thing of beauty. The faces of the fairies were gilded . . . it cost a shilling each time the gilding was done and, for economy's sake, the elves had to keep their faces golden between the matinées and evening performances. We were "such stuff as dreams are made of."

I wished very much that Their Majesties, the King and Queen, should see the play, and therefore wrote to a friend at Court. He replied telling me that he shared my wish, that he held the opinion that the Sovereign of a country should be associated with what is best in art and that there could be no two opinions about the beauty of the production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream." He ended up by saying that he would do his best. He did, and was successful. Their Majesties came and I have reason to believe were pleased with the play.

Everyone loved the production of "The Dream" and the Press was unanimous in its praise. One paper said: "The work was revived in a manner at once so intellectually just and artistically brave that it held a crowded house spell-bound throughout, and was acclaimed at the end with prolonged and unanimous enthusiasm."

For once we got a complete text. I cannot remember that any passage was omitted. Each speech was delivered with sympathy and understanding; and several times speakers "slowed down" as they came to the most beautiful passages which, familiar as they are, are yet ever to be heard with delight. Furthermore, by a genuine inspiration, Oberon, Titania and the rest of the fairies were made to appear with gilded faces and hair, clothes of gold and silver, which made them seem beings of another order, of a separate creation, remote

from humanity. For music, there were old English folk-tunes, and old English dances, including a masque so clownish and funny that it convulsed the house with happy laughter. The decoration in scene and costume blended simplicity with splendour and Bottom and Quince and the rest of the rustic players were presented, not as buffoons trying to be funny, but as simple souls: earnest and faithful, and in consequence, infinitely droll.

“Never anything can be amiss
When simpleness and duty tender it.”

CHAPTER XIII

THE POET AND THE ACTRESS

IT seems to me, as I relive my life in these pages, that they ought to bear the title "Let us now praise famous men in general and Shaw in particular." I am content that it should be so: for all through my life, from my earliest days when my father—most wonderful of men—gave me the poet Milton for my mental feeding-bottle, all manner of men who have made their mark in the world have—bless their generous spirits—helped me to find myself and to discover the things I truly love.

Until I came to understand how dependent on others we all are for intellectual, artistic and spiritual entertainment and stimulus, I had not grasped the allegory of the "Good Samaritan." The snares, the errors, and the evils of the world are thieves. We all fall among them. Happy are those whose wounds are bound and whose progress through the world is set going again by the good Samaritan—the faithful friend. He does not pass you by. He may be all unaware how precious is the help he gives; for never was truer word said than this: "You can only teach what you do not try to impart." And of all the good Samaritans who have brought comfort to me, those whose powers of encouragement and of healing have been greatest, have been men with whom I worked and whose names I have so far mentioned least—the poets.

To some people—and well I know it—poetry is a bore and poets futile folk. These lucky ones never get lost in the wilderness, and need no manna from heaven to sustain them. To others poetry is a luxury to be in-

dulged in sparingly. To us it is the staff of life: our daily bread.

Poetry is morning song and evensong and sunshine all day long. Nor are we who belong to this last company few in numbers. I have said poetry to weavers in Lancashire, to miners in Wales and to workers in shoddy factories in Yorkshire, people who scorn pretence and have none in them, and in my verse-speaking pilgrimages I have found that these people whom cultured folk call common do not *like* poetry but *love* it. Knowing this, I dare at this stage of my narrative try to say what poetry means to me. It may appeal to those who love poetry and it may amuse those who don't. Another reason impels me. The help which those good Samaritans, poetry and poets, gave during the dark days which were to succeed my full and happy years is to be had by every man in the days when he most needs help.

Poetry quickens to new life. The seed of this new life of the sensations lies dormant in us all. Only poetry can awaken it. To be near a poet, to hear him speak, is to know a new kind of human being. As a glass sings in response to the notes of a violin, so the heart sings when it hears a poet. And more: poetry releases those inhibitions which mar as well as make mankind. The poet has knowledge which can scarcely be put in words, hence the struggle which must always go on in him. Yet even when his words are vague, something of the meaning steals like music into the hearer's mind. All the charms of Prospero were made of music and of poetry. The poet tells of a life in which those who are not poets firmly disbelieve, and that is why people of "sound good sense" so often mock and persecute him.

Poetry tells that happiness is only a half-way house on the road of experience, and whispers that there is a greater seeking beyond happiness, full of excitement and pain, leading to darker mysteries and through them to a fuller life.

Poetry unifies the world: it is the touch of Nature that makes the whole world kin; light and darkness, plants

and stars are all parts of you and you of them. Stark nonsense to the unbeliever: a fixed article of faith to the adept. You run and your feet play tunes upon the earth, and the reverberations, listened to and loved by the stars, last in some form or other through all eternity: they change but they cannot die. Colour, music, odour, physically so fleeting, do not fade away. They live for ever: they enter into and become parts of your life and remain in your very blood.

I daresay that all this has been written before or, if not, that it is not worth saying, but I am writing my life, and poetry is part, and the greater part, of it. True or false, these attempts to picture to myself what poetry means to me have increased my natural love of poetry, have made my world a happier one, and have made possible the all but impossible task of making friends with poets, with that elusive being John Masefield, with Charles Ricketts who, though he painted pictures, was a poet if ever there was one, and with that simpler soul Thomas Hardy. If I could write down all they have taught me, the world would be the richer. Nor is it only of remote and difficult things that poets have taught me. They have taught me, more than any others, not only the joy, but also the fun of life. People often take pride in not knowing their neighbours. They would take pride in knowing them if they had my neighbours. It was worth while going to live on Boar's Hill if only to have an occasional talk with Robert Bridges; to meet him, handsome, stalwart, disdaining motor cars, on one of his tramps into Oxford and out again: over eighty years of age, and impossible to keep up with him. He may have been lofty and sour to those he loved not, but to those that loved him he was sweet as summer. And what heartiness there was in his laugh! It made him young and those that heard it young too.

I was talking of it to another neighbour poet, Edward Thompson, "Yes," said Edward, "he could save an awkward situation by his laugh." "One day—it was the time when Robert Bridges was writing 'The Testament

of Beauty,' that marvellous poem in which the joyousness of youth and the wisdom of age speak with one voice—Bridges came to see me, threw himself down in a chair wearily. I was hard at work. 'A bad day,' said Bridges, 'only eight lines in the whole day.' I heard him absently: politeness demanded some comment, and to my horror I heard myself saying: 'Perhaps they were very long lines' . . . Life-long friendships have met with a bad end for less than that. But Bridges's laugh came so spontaneous and so infectious that it made me laugh too; the gaucherie was condoned and forgotten—at all events by Bridges."

Who but the children of a poet could have played such a delightful prank on their parents as John Masefield's children once did. Sunday morning: the Masefields' house on Boar's Hill. In the afternoon there will be a drove of young men from Oxford coming to sit at John's feet. Unfortunately John and Con Masefield must go out to lunch. The children, Judith and Loo, must act as hosts till they return. When John and Con came hurrying back, there on the door they read the children's scrawl: "The parents are out, and the children do not wish to be disturbed."

What happy days I have shared with the Masefields. To be with them is always a happiness. The simplest of households: but good fare, and John himself, offering you with his own hands the things that Con has prepared for her guests.

Yet though we are such near neighbours and old friends, I must be very discreet; for when they are working, poets are inaccessible. I would loiter up the road, hoping to see John; but Con Masefield, watching with an ever jealous eye to guard him from intrusion, would say, kind but ruthless: "No, Lillah, John's hard at work"; although too polite to add like the children "and does not wish to be disturbed," and so after a while I would say good-bye; but curiosity would drive me to slip round by the garden way to the little wooden rustic hut away among the trees and bracken; the poet's

workshop. Peeping from the bushes—oh! the indiscretion of it—I can get a glimpse of him and find out how he works. There he is with his hands full of crumbs, and all the birds for miles around are flying and hopping nearer and nearer to him; now a hop forward, now a swift retreat, but always in the end clustering close about him. Here is the poet of whom another of the craft must have been thinking when he told how the poet went out into the fields to sing his songs and, as he sang, all the birds stopped their songs to listen and, listening, whispered to one another: “Il est de la maison.” He is; for there never has been an English poet who loved more passionately or more tenderly bird and beast, and flower and tree.

But sometimes the shy mood would pass, and when I went to see him he would say mysteriously: “Come, Lillah, let me show you what I’ve made for you,” and he would bring me to his room and put into my hands a lovely model of a sailing-ship: full rigged, carved with his own hands. Once I took him a lot of little birds which Dolly Richardson, one of our dear old friends, had made. He delighted to have them, and some time after when he went to see Ramsay MacDonald to pay his duty to him, Masfield took with him some of these little birds and gave them to the Prime Minister. When he told me he had done so, I was overjoyed, for I knew that Ramsay MacDonald has the delicacy of mind, so hard to keep in public life, that would make him glad to have a gift which to others would seem so trivial and so silly: a gift of singing birds from one of them.

We often used to discuss among friends the strange mixture of gentleness and violence frequently found in Masfield’s poetry. “Oh! that’s simple enough,” said one.—himself a poet and a neighbour—was it not Gilbert Murray! “That’s the goats!” “What!” we asked. “Yes, the goats that Judith keeps. The expletives are explosions which mark the moments when John hears himself suddenly called away to shoo off the goats barking the fruit trees in the garden!”

Oh, the sensitiveness of the poets! how beautiful it makes their poems and how hard it makes their lives! One day John read to us a poem he had written as a preface to one of Gordon Craig's books on the theatre. That erratic genius, soured perhaps by the neglect of people to accept his innovations in the art of theatrical production, had, I think, written somewhat slightly of the English, of their artistic shortcomings, their failure to appreciate artistic work. John had caught the complaint and re-echoed it in his poem. "But"—remarks one who was present, one who loves the English and believes that they do not deserve these censures—"Why go in for denunciation? Have you not noticed, John, there is only one good poet of denunciation—Jeremiah—and he's not read much nowadays." Silence! A week after, when I met him, I asked how the poem was getting on? "I've burnt it," John said in the deep intense voice he has when moved, "I've burnt it, after what Freddie said."

You must be very careful with the poets, else they will cry with Prospero:

"I'll break my staff
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth
And deeper than did ever plummet sound.
I'll drown my book!"

I suppose only heavenly voices can help the poets. Earthly ones, no matter how sympathetic must always jar upon their ears. Even silence does not always solace them. John Masefield's house: Galsworthy, Gilbert Murray, Lillah and another assembled to hear John read a play of his, a play about the ghosts which go on haunting the house and exercise strange influences on the descendants of the house. John reads on until the play is finished: lays down the script and sits with downcast eyes. We all sit with downcast eyes. Silence proceeds, blank, interminable, until, with a bang, John crashes the script on the table and rushes from the room. Days after I met him and told him how that

silence froze me. "Oh, Lillah," he said, "if only they had said something!" Well may we say Heaven help the poet.

Men, alas! can give them very little in return for the help which they give them.

The poet and the actress: what a theme for a gentle comedy—a comedy of emotional cross purposes, of repression and expression, of reserve and spontaneity.

I open the daily paper: a portrait of John Masefield. The announcement that John is Poet Laureate. Telephone. "Is that you, John?" "Yes, Lillah." "May I come to congratulate you?" "Of course, do come," says John. So carrying in our hands two tamarisks—as substitutes for bays and far more beautiful—off we go. There is John in the garden. The photographers are with him. I rush up, wild with joy and excitement to throw my arms about him. "Not before the Press," says John. The tamarisks droop in my hands and my companion, who understands so well how to soothe me, and tame my wildness with a jest, says to me as we go away after planting the tamarisks on either side of the Poetry Hall, which Masefield has built near his house: "I don't agree: to embrace without the Press is quite impossible."


Memory is often a subservient jade, handing to you only what you want and concealing what does not fit into your mood; but when I ask her is this picture of the hypersensitiveness of poets true she recalls Robert Bridges coming back from America and telling—again with his hearty laugh—how when he evaded the interviewers who met him on the boat, they got back on him by printing in their papers in largest caption "THE KING'S CANARY REFUSES TO SING." Memory recalls also John Masefield in no shrinking mood. Palestine: a long and tiring railway journey. Masefield trying to sleep in his compartment. Enter the inevitable Paul Pry. "Let me introduce myself, Mr. Masefield." He does, and begins to talk, goes on talking, asks at last: "And what, Mr. Masefield, do you like most of all the things you've seen in Palestine?" "An empty railway carriage,"

says John, and Paul, good at heart, sorrowfully gathers up his belongings, remarking: "I suppose that means I ought to go back to my own compartment?" "It does," said John.

I, too, have often felt that I also ought to go back to my compartment; have understood how careful you must be with this shy elusive being.

You must be very careful, thus far and no farther may you reach in his friendship. All poets are, I think, like that: their innermost life you may only share by reading what they write.

It is only natural that I should wonder to what it is I owe these friendships. Is it all due to the generosity of the friends and the luck of opportunity? Much of it certainly is; but I think that I, too, have given them something which they have found precious. It cannot be knowledge, for I have little, nor culture, for I have none; but I think that there is something naïve and elemental in me which enables my eyes to see some things, things which are hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes. I am tempted to wish, now that I am writing about myself, that Masfield and Hardy, Barrie and Shaw, Wells and Galsworthy had told me what they thought about me. But perhaps it is better as it is, for after all, are not the most precious things those that we take for granted—air and light, sunshine and storm, laughter and the love of friends?



CHAPTER XIV

ACTING IN AMERICA

I 1914

PROFESSOR GILBERT MURRAY was staying with me for the week-end at Stansted when the news came of the outbreak of the war between France and Germany. I was with him when we heard the news. I watched his face. It grew suddenly old. The faint humorous smile which softens its habitual severity faded away as the shadow of sorrow passed over his face. But there was no fear there, only grief and resolution. I saw him then for the first time for what he is—a man of great courage and great character.

The week-end over, I went to stay with H. G. Wells in Essex. England also was now at war. I saw the same transformation. His face, generally so mobile, had become rigid and the playful look stern. I tried to distract him: "No, Lillah," he said, "no, I can't get away from the war. The world is falling to pieces. I can do nothing but think, think. . . ."

I went back to London. I had to rehearse a new play, "The Impossible Woman," at the Haymarket. It took some courage to go on doing ordinary things in such times: but the play ran on, the war ran on.

December came. I was urged to go to America. I did not want to go. I went to Mr. Asquith hoping that he would bid me to stay. He bade me go: "You can do nothing by staying. Go and produce plays there and come back with enough money to begin in management again when the war is over," and so I went.

New York was not yet aware of the horror of the war: a paragraph or two in the daily paper; a shopgirl of English descent crying as she said "they have dropped a

bomb on England." I acted. The audience were lethargic. They came to "Androcles and the Lion" and seemed to think that it was two plays, two short ones—"Androcles" and "The Lion." They laughed a little, but when we played "The Doctor's Dilemma," they got up and walked out of the theatre. We played also "The Man who Married a Dumb Wife," Anatole France's adaptation of the Rabelais story. I wore a wonderful head-dress which Ricketts designed. Shannon's painting of me in it is reproduced on the opposite page. What with Shaw as our playwright, with Mr. Norman Wilkinson to design our costumes, and with new and original methods of production, the critics did not know what to say. So they stuck a label on us: "Art Nouveau" and went on to express their disapproval of it all. They found "The Doctor's Dilemma" "even more brazen, incorrigible and shameless" than "Androcles and the Lion."

We left New York and went to Yale and Harvard, where we played "Iphigenia" and the "Trojan Women." The audiences sometimes numbered ten thousand. The productions were brilliant and the receptions were often brilliant too, but I ached to be home again. Now and again some solace came to me. Some comfort came when I went to hear Ellen Terry in New York giving dramatic talks on Shakespeare's women. She was old, her eyesight was failing and she must peer at the large type from which she read, but as she spoke it was not Ellen Terry but Juliet, Beatrice, Hermione who stood there and spoke to us. The vast audience fell under the spell. Before I went, I had heard people say: "She is old now. Her memory begins to fail. She forgets her lines." But she carried us all away from this world to another land, the land of Shakespeare! But when it was over and I was back again in this world, even her magic spell was broken and I began to long for home again.

I can understand now that coming events were already casting their shadows on the East, and that I was witnessing the bewilderment of a people as of those who



From a Painting by Charles Shannon, R.A.

LILLAH McCARTHY AS "THE DUMB WIFE"
in "The Man who Married a Dumb Wife," by Anatole France,
at The Ambassadors Theatre in 1917

sit in darkness before they see the great light. The times were out of joint. There was malaise in the air. All I could think of was to get back—get back to England and find some work to do.

II 1915-1918

I left New York and arrived in London some time in the summer of 1915. I must get work. Who is there to help me? Shaw will, Barrie will, if I ask them. I wrote to Shaw. He sent me back a letter which I shall always treasure:

“You are now at an important stage in your career. Like Mrs. Siddons, you have come up from the Provinces, and for ten years played every part worth playing on the London stage. I know that you consider that you have never had a chance, but that only shows that you are a born actress. Anyhow, you have been right in the movement, you have been the Venus of Milo, and all the other fashion plates, and the fact that you think the Venus a rotten statue, and adore the fashions, does not alter your status. Any other actress would give half her toes to have created Ann Whitefield, Jocasta, Iphigenia, Jennifer, Margaret and Lavinia (the super), to say nothing of Hermione and Viola. The parts you didn’t play are forgotten: these are history. Now you have to exploit that solid reputation; and, I repeat, the first thing is to get a solid grip of the American star circuit; for that is where the money will be made. You ought not to touch London again until you can get a big part; Mrs. Siddons playing fascinating foundlings is unthinkable.

“Meanwhile, I am busy writing plays for other people who don’t despise Lavinias and the like; one for Gertrude Kingston to fill up her Great Catherine bill, and one for Lady Gregory to save the Irish Theatre from bankruptcy. Both are finished, thank Heaven; and now I have only about half-a-dozen pressing jobs

to finish simultaneously. I get through a heap of work here: it is drudge and swim, swim and drudge all day. Charlotte also drudges. There is a doctor who hypodermically injects hyperchlorites of soda or potassium into people on the ground that they lack chlorine. Rheumatic patients dance hornpipes, and ladies with growths of any sort find them shrivel up by magic and forget all about them. 'Cure guaranteed,' as Schutzmacher says. I don't guarantee it; but my dentist who is not a fool, has told me a lot of stories about this treatment. It might amuse you, and couldn't do you any harm.

"I am called away, and must fly

"Toujours à toi,

"G.B.S."

Work alone could give me the tonic that I needed and Barrie and Shaw took good care that the medicine should be forthcoming in liberal measure. Barrie especially saw to it that there was no homeopathy in the treatment. He gave me his one-act plays, three of them, helped me to get them put on at the Coliseum, arranged the cast and attended all the rehearsals. Realising with his subtle brain what a balm to hurt minds praise is he wrote to me after my performance of his play, "Half-an-Hour" a letter which could not fail to make me happy. It ran:

"I saw you in 'Half-an-Hour' tonight, and was proud of you. You gave quite a splendid performance and looked adorable. Bravo indeed. This sort of thing heartens an author. Please give my grateful thanks to Mr. Ross and Mr. Brydon and all for work that I deeply appreciate."

■

Half an Hour."

ADELPHI TERRACE HOUSE,

STRAND, W. C.

17 April, 1917

17, Dear Lillah,

I saw you in
"Half an Hour" tonight, and
was proud of you. You
gave quite a splendid per-
formance and looked
adorable. Bravo indeed. This
sort of thing heartens an
author. Please give my
certain thanks to Ross
McRyden and all for
what they do. I deeply appreciate
it.
Yours J. M. Barrie

AUTOGRAPH LETTER BY SIR JAMES BARRIE

Galsworthy also joined in the conspiracy to encourage and wrote the letter shown on the next page, which as he meant it should, could not fail to act as a tonic to the dispirited.

Shaw would write a one-act play for me, and not a penny of royalty would he take! When I pressed Shaw, he made me laugh—a little rueful laugh—by saying, with well-acted brusqueness, "The woman doesn't know what she's talking about."

Shaw's one-act play was "Annajanska or the Wild Grand Duchess." It was to be, to the world, a translation from the Russian by Gregory Piessipoff, but ostriches with their heads in the sand are invisible compared with Shaw's anonymity. The critics came and went away saying once again: "Shaw, of course." I had a splendid entrance in the play—an entrance to suit the vast space of the Coliseum stage and auditorium which demands breadth and grandeur. I wore a gorgeous white uniform half covered by an enormous green overcoat trimmed with black fur. Ricketts did it for me.

At the opening of the play, I am led on in the hands of soldiers. My first gesture is to bite their wrists and free myself, so that I may approach the general. I have to fire a fusillade at the soldiers to enforce my demand to see the general alone.

I enjoyed the play and was preening myself that, unlike Raina, Anna knew what extravaganza-comedy is, but suddenly Shaw's truncheon landed on my head.

He wrote:

"25th Janury, 1918.

"You have spoilt the end of Annajanska. Why, after I took the trouble to get Strammfest out of your way by the window trick, leaving you the centre all to yourself, and prolonging the anticipation sufficiently to enable the audience to take it fully in, have you undone it all? At the first performance it was the only point that missed fire; and it took the end of the play from you and handed it to Ayrton.

My dear little

The one thing I regret about today's performance is that I didn't kiss you, and now I've missed the chance so admirably sanctified by Barrie. You were splendid.

I cannot say more. Ada also regrets that I did not do my duty. Always &c.

J.G.

AUTOGRAPH LETTER BY JOHN GALSWORTHY

"What is the matter with the band? Is Dove sulking about anything? They have very properly gone back to my original suggestion for the prelude, which they told me was too short, and which I *knew* was just right; but why on earth don't they give the last 13 bars of the overture at the end full crash instead of piffing as they do?

"It went very well to-day until the end; but every time you dropped a bit of our arranged business you missed the effect it was meant to produce. Unless you say 'all the king's horses' in profile, upstanding, and with the playfulness over the sadness, you will not get the full effect of the contrast when you sink over him immediately after.

"Do kick the dynasty *out* with your left foot, and not *in* with your right. It makes all the difference in the intelligibility of the gestures.

"I could not see the lighting from my stage box; but it seemed to me that the dazzling whiteness of the uniform was gone. Has *that* been altered?

"In great haste,
"G.B.S."

I was playing at the Coliseum when my mother came to live with me. During the years when I was touring, and also during my married life, I had only seen her intermittently, and had never got to know her—although needless to say I only realised that afterwards.

As is the case with most good parents her goodness was taken for granted. But now that we were living together, now that she was beginning to grow old, bonds of tenderness began to twine themselves about our lives, and, as tendrils at first weak grow stronger with every coil, so our affection for one another strengthened. The years passed by, each year stole a little of the fading colour from her cheek, a little from the laughing brightness of her eye, and as her frame became more fragile my love for her became more solicitous. The succeeding years wrought a curious inversion of relationship. I

began to feel for her as a mother feels for a child and she began, albeit with a whimsical show of reluctance, to lean more and more on me. We would go for a walk together, my feet slowing down to keep pace with hers. We would come out of Adelphi Terrace to the Strand: she loved crowds and people and bright light. I would offer her my arm. "No!" she would say, "some young man will need it some time. I have the policeman to look after me"; but she would take my arm all the same, and by the little squeeze she would give it, and by her roguish eye would show that though she loved to tease, she loved also, as age bore down upon her, to be mothered by her child.

She was a family communist and made no scruple about it. The tea set would vanish piece by piece from the table till but one was left; I would comment upon it. She would seem indifferent and go off to pay one of her frequent visits to another of her children, none too well endowed with worldly goods. The last piece had disappeared! When I went to visit these relations there the tea set would be and they would thank me for it. "It was good of you to let Mother bring it, but she could only carry one piece at a time," and Mother with glee would say, "'Rule by dividing' is our family motto." And so, as she became my spoilt child, my love and veneration for my Mother grew and went on growing until at last her spirit had to leave the body which it had outgrown.

It was in the days that I was playing at the Coliseum that I had an unforgettable instance of her wisdom and understanding. The war had dealt hardly with us, as it had with all. The play at the Coliseum came to an end and I went home very tired. When I got to the flat in Adelphi Terrace, the front room looking out over the river was crowded. There were soldiers everywhere: Australian soldiers in khaki. They were all clustered about my mother who was giving them tea. "Lillah," she said, "your friends have come to see you." I stood puzzled. "Yes," one of them said—a tall man with hag-

gard face but with a brave smile, "we've a photograph of you at home on the piano. Mother put it there. She saw you act in Melbourne. She told me to go and see you, so I've come. We all went to see you act this afternoon, and now we've come along to thank you for the first beautiful thing we've seen since we left home. I hope you didn't mind?" Mind! I could have kissed him. I could have kissed them all. I handed them tea, sent out for more cakes; thin bread and butter was no good for these big men. They stayed a long time. I could not bear to let them go, and when they went my mother placid as ever, said: "It will do you good to see other people who have suffered. Yes," she said, "they only came to look at the house, too shy to come in. I made them."

Where did she learn such wisdom?

A few weeks later life sent another message.

A new play in which I was to appear was to be tried out in Glasgow, and I was to leave by the midnight train. My luggage was already at the station, and I set out carrying only a light suitcase. There were no cabs. There were no people in the streets. The lamps were out. I groped my way along, thinking there must be an air-raid coming and wondering why I had not heard the warning; but I had to get to Euston. I nearly fell into a man who came out quickly from a doorway. He clutched my arm saying: "I must find you shelter—there is an air-raid coming." "I cannot stop," I said, "I must get to Euston to catch my train." He said: "If you must, I will go with you," and took my suitcase and walked by my side. "I know who you are," he said, "I want to help you." Presently I asked his name. He made no answer. "But why are you out?" I asked. "Down and out," he said. I took his arm, I could not help it. We walked along all the way to Euston without a word, and when he left me, as though in answer to my unspoken question, he said simply: "We have helped one another," and was gone. . . .

He came—a messenger to bring me courage. I took

the gift he gave me and hoped—and still hope—that he meant what he said: "We have helped one another!"

Within a week or so I was back in London with a new play, "Too Much Money" by Zangwill. I had taken courage. The first letter I opened was one from Margot Asquith:

"Will you be an *angel* and lend me your green Russian coat and black fur that you wore in Bernard Shaw's war play. I only want to copy it for my dressing gown, and I would give it to no one else, and return it to you soon. I should be *truly* grateful."

So the green garment of the Coliseum went off to Downing Street and, next time I saw the sparkling Margot, she was resplendent in a copy of my Russian coat.

III

During the time I was at the Coliseum, a new friend came into my life: Lord Lucas. I had met him first some years before, in 1911, at a party at Stafford House. He was tall and dark and powerful. J. M. Barrie, whose friend he was, had described Lord Lucas thus:

"I had known him intimately for years, seen him racing the wind on horseback, riding in races, walked with him a dozen miles a day, before I had any idea that he was even lame. Since then I have known him walk twenty miles of the stiffest country in the Hebrides, fishing a great part of the way, and return to play cricket or lawn tennis. It was all done with the power of his will."

Lord Lucas was a new type of man for me: a politician, a soldier, a landowner: different altogether from all my other friends.

He seemed to me the moment that I met him a man like Bayard, without fear and without reproach; and

when I came to know him well, I found that my instinct had been right; but a Bayard as debonair as brave; a man, moreover, who had no selfishness in him, but in its place a great-hearted and yet fastidious love of life.

On the day after our meeting at Stafford House, he came to the theatre and told me: "Maurice Baring, my sister and I are going to take you away to the New Forest after the theatre is over." We went. At three o'clock in the morning we came to the New Forest. Sitting under a great arch of trees we ate our supper and waited for the first blue rays of the sun. We waited there and watched till dawn. We walked to the house but "No," he said, "we will all sleep in the forest," and there, with rugs upon the heather, we slept. I woke to find Samson changed to Pan: and yet not changed. Pan in his manner at home in the New Forest, Samson in his untiring energy. We bathed. Maurice Baring, as was his wont, diving into the swimming-pool wearing all his clothes. Towards evening we rode the forest ponies under the dark shadows of the trees, we raced, and only happiness could keep up with us. I felt as though all my life had been spent in prison and that at last I was free; free with a freedom which I had not known even happiness could give.

We talked together. He would have me tell all about my life. I told him of my father and he understood. "He was a wonderful man," he said. I told him that I had played Mercia in Oxford. "Yes, I know. They gave you an opal cross set in diamonds hidden in a bunch of flowers. Have you got it still?" "Of course I have." "I sent it to you," he said. "I fell in love with you—we all fell in love with you; but I was too shy even to try to meet you."

The visit ended. We often met. He wanted me to play a season of Shakespeare and knew how much I wished it; and one day he came to the theatre with a cheque. "Here's the money for Shakespeare. I've sold my pig-farm. I like his pearls better than my pigs!"

After this generous act we met once more. "I am

going to France to-night," he said. "When I come back. . . ."

He did not come back. The plane which he was flying crashed.

"High, high against the clouds, against the setting
sun,
The fight was fought, and your great task was
done."

CHAPTER XV

“EVERYTHING HAS TO BE BUILT UP AFRESH”

I 1918

“ANNAJANSKA, THE WILD GRAND DUCHESS”
A had fired her last volley. She had served her cause and my purpose. She had brought me a little money and had made me pull myself together: nobody could mope in her grand clothes. Fine feathers do make fine birds: ladybirds at all events. Margot became more regal, could fire the volleys of her wit with more deadly aim when she was wearing Anna-janska's plumage.

There was nothing for me to do except to get away from the daily worries which, like the thimble of that old grim school-mistress of my childhood, were tapping, tapping on my head: always on the same spot like the incessant taps of Chinese torturers. I would at all costs change the spot so that, though the worries came, they should not fall on the same place.

I went to Lulworth Cove in Dorsetshire. It was a lovely place in those days. The sea had been trying to destroy it for centuries, but had only contrived to make it more beautiful, fretting the chalk cliffs into fantastic shapes.

Years after I went back to Lulworth again. The scene was changed. Neptune, wily in defeat, had called in Mars, relying on his vanity to lend a hand in the destruction of the peace and beauty of the place. Mars responded with soldierly alacrity. He sent a tank, and yet another tank, and before long the General Officer commanding could report like Caesar: “I came, I saw, I overcame” . . . the great beauty of Lulworth Cove.

The victory echoed round. Professional jealousy was engaged. The Air Force in fierce rivalry, pulled down its barns of aerodromes in one place to build greater in another. North Oxfordshire had been privileged to suffer. It had suffered. Now the pleasant vale of Abingdon must do its bit. It is doing it, and broad, sandy fields that should and could be growing food, are scarred by the wheels of aeroplanes and the air made hideous by the cries which these lively silver birds utter in their flight. The joyful news of devastation of our land echoes in every office of Government and Municipality. The latter build houses that only heroes could live in. I see a row of them as I write: red blotches with slate roofs, and when I first went to visit my friends who live in them the water was streaming from the walls. Glad tidings these for the Forestry Commission. They must do their worst. They have been doing valiant service in clothing the brown hills with forests, but must now set about destroying. Inspiration comes: the New Forest. Grub up those gnarled oaks that William planted more than eight centuries ago; he destroyed homes to plant them, now is their turn. Bring Forestry Officers from India where they have been doing great work for the Empire and plan to make them grub up the oaks and in their place plant lines of pine or fir to shut out for ever beauty from the ground whereon she walks. London shall suffer too—as though she had not suffered already. The relic of the Regency, Carlton House Terrace, shall go the way of Regent Street. We built a pitiable Pitti Palace there: make way for offices, sky-scraping offices on the footsteps of the throne. Arterial roads you shall have too. Napoleon drove straight roads through the heart of France, we will slash through the heart of England with roads no less straight and broader. And when they are made—and remade many times—mean rows of ugly houses and avenues of ill-chosen and untended trees shall guard them. It matters not, for those who drive along will go so fast that they will never see them. Speed, speed, we

worship the god of speed. Speed motor-buses, messengers of ugliness that we may carry and confirm the glad tidings of destruction through every country lane. Organise ugliness, our leaders, we beseech ye! and right manfully they answer to our prayer. Goodbye, Waterloo Bridge. Goodbye, Adelphi Terrace. Threatened men live long, but your doom is told.

Genius can build, adorn with sculpture, and light up at night with a lovely glow a great new building. Pass it by, declare the brooding figure of Night is ugly, flock to Piccadilly Circus, lit up with a myriad lights all ineptly twinkling, the writing on the wall proclaiming that beauty is not wanted any longer.

Where are the gentlemen of England that such things should be let to come to pass? The men who built the country houses, who filled them with lovely pictures, who planted parks and gardens, those trustees of England's loveliness? Have they all become cockneys too? Are the green fields become nothing more in their eyes than earth or mud, on which to kick or throw or hit or carry a ball about? Rise up, ye men and women of England, and build again the temple of beauty in England's green and pleasant land.

I have tried all my days—a modest neophyte—to preserve a little of the beauty of life. I shall go on trying to the end. Thousands of others have been trying. Shall we be beaten at the last or shall we triumph? Who can say? but let us go on fighting, flying Hawke's immortal signal: "We shall fight in shoal water so, if we sink, our flag will still be flying."

But on my first visit to Lulworth Cove I found the peace I sought. I would sit looking over the sea, my back turned to the cliffs and rolling downs. It was Hardy's country, and to know it was his made me happy. The house, half-manor, half-farm, where Angel Clare was born was not so far away, and behind me somewhere were the fields with all the dairyfolk on their knees, rooting out the garlic which spoiled the butter by its bitter taste. I would wonder why it is that

Hardy's books, which always bring peace to me, make others as bitter as the dairyfolks' butter. When I read him, I hear the rustling of the stars as they steal along the corridors of the sky. I can feel, as no learned book on astronomy can make me feel, the motion of the earth revolving and making headlong way through space.

I would sit hidden in one of the coves and listen to the old fisherman, with his strong Dorset voice and accent, telling the lad who was helping him tar his boat "we men of 'Darset' be the finest in the world," whereat the lad would look up and join in the litany: "we *be*, fayther," and half-shocked and half-amused I would hear the father impart such knowledge of the reasons for the greatness of the men of Dorset as would rejoice those progressive people who hold that no knowledge of the world is too intimate to be withheld from the young.

One day, as I sat there, the postman brought me a letter. It was from Shaw and with it a play for me to read. It was "Heartbreak House." I marvelled at his kindness in sending me his play; in thinking of me at all at a time when he had troubles of his own. He had seen the war with his own eyes. He had not seen it as most of our world did. Shaw had affronted the convictions which were making men sacrifice their lives. He had testified to the faith that was in him and the world had found his testimony out of season. Ramsay MacDonald had also seen the war with his own eyes. Both had to suffer. Ramsay was expelled from his golf club, and Shaw packed himself off to Ireland to write.

Prophets know no temperateness of language. If they did, they would not be prophets. The people who ask prophets to speak comfortable things to them only get the prophets they deserve—false ones. Shaw's denunciations hurt, not only because of their outspokenness, but because of the violence of language with which they were spoken, and so, like the East, he

“Bowed low before the blast
In patient, deep disdain.
He let the legions thunder past
And plunged in thought again.”

Shaw had played the part of the nigger who, knowing how drowning people struggle, had hit one of them over the head with a hammer before dragging him out of the water. People resented salvation at such a price. Years afterwards, when he was bringing out the Collected Edition of his works, I asked Shaw whether he was going to suppress his writings about the war. “Suppress them!” he said, “Certainly not. I shall publish them so that people may see how right I was.” The spirit which made him republish them was the same that made him write:

“Now is the time to pull ourselves together—to feel our muscle—to realise the value of our strength and pluck, and to tell the truth unashamed like men of courage and character, not to shirk it like the official apologists of a Foreign Office plot.”

Whether he was right or wrong, who will not now admire his courage? I had at all events seen enough of those strange times of intense and fine and warped emotions to understand something of the mood of a people at war. Hardy’s “Dynasts” and John Masefield’s “Philip the Second,” both of which tell of heroic moments in our history, fell on deaf ears. The drama of the present so obsessed all minds that they had no room for drama of past times. A prophet without honour in the country of his adoption, Shaw went back to the land of his birth and wrote “Heartbreak House.”

The letter which he sent me with the play did not seem particularly interesting at the time, although for Shaw to express a doubt about anything he had done had a somewhat novel sound:

"There is something about the play that makes me extraordinarily reluctant to let it go out of my hands. I suppose I am not quite convinced that it is really finished. You are the first to extract it; and I can only let you have a peep at it, as I want it back, though there is no hurry. But don't show it to anyone who matters."

I turned to the play and read it eagerly and, as is but natural, solely from the point of view of myself playing a part in it. Later on, when I came to know the play well, I found, as I think, the clue to the cause of Shaw's hesitation. But for the moment all I cared about was to play the part of Ellie: the girl who falls under the spell of the ancient, seer-like, roaring Shotover. Shotover, who is Shaw become a patriarch vociferating repentance to an indifferent world; thundering out his denunciations so that the rafters of Heartbreak House ring with them whilst the inmates and visitors do anything but listen. They touch their foreheads significantly at the sound of the "balmy" one, or find him funny or are only bored at such vulgar displays of passion. But Ellie is young. She has ears to hear. Ellie listens, though the middle-aged yawn. Shotover must compass the whole world to make one proselyte: Ellie: youth.

I too listened. I am Ellie. I *will* play the part. I write to tell Shaw of my glorious dream—myself Ellie. But Shaw knows how to shatter others' dreams. He replied:

"Yes, it's a glorious dream. But only a dream. Mrs. Campbell wants to play Ellie. Ellen O'Malley is the only woman on the stage who could touch Ellie without coming into competition with the two gorgeous females who must play Hesione and Ariadne. Unless they are both irresistible, whilst Ellie is born to immaculate virginity, there is no play. Imagine

Lillah McCarthy at the top of her superb prime left a spiritual bride in the arms of an ancient mariner of 99.

"But the play is no good anyhow. Lights have to be out at 10.30. It would mean beginning at 7.15 to empty stalls. A fortnight's matinée would be its full measure, and who would master such parts for a fortnight's engagement? We must be content to dream about it. Let it lie there to show that the old dog can still bark a bit.

"Here the Spanish 'flu rages: no, you had better fly back to Lulworth. Charlotte's temperature is 103. Probably mine will be that when I catch it. If not, I shall be in Town as usual on Thursday. I feel horrid.

"In haste—off to waylay the doctor, ever

"G.B.S."

The verdict was pronounced, and from it nothing would budge him. I begged. I entreated. In vain! I upbraided. As a last resource I appealed to his sense of chivalry. Tried to touch him on his softest spot: the solar plexus of his character. Shaw was touched: but only very lightly, the guard of his determination is so hard to pierce. But to gain time for the next round—and he knew me well enough to know that there would be one—he wrote back: "I am not teasing, I am very anxious about your future, we must meet and talk it over." Then I made a bad blunder. I got a friend—a clever sort of man—to write a long letter to him on my behalf. I thought it was a good letter. It sounded like a K.C. stating a case for appeal. I copied it out, signed it, and sent the letter to Shaw. The reply, prompt and crushing, intimated that Shaw liked my own letters better than that of the polite letter-writer I had got to do my correspondence.

What was I to do? If I might not play Ellie I could think of nothing else than to tour the provinces once again: this time with three or four of Shakespeare's

plays. I asked Shaw's advice. It came: a cold douche:

"Bensonizing," he called it. "If you become a female Barry Sullivan, it means a colossal fortune [for the stage] and frightful physical toil. If not, it means hand-to-mouth existence in professional lodgings, and, with luck, the succession to Sarah Thorne in Margate. Anyway, the provinces are not possible now."

I must have written suggesting that he might help me to get a theatre in London, for he continued:

"As to my being a rich man, the truth is I am a man living beyond my income. We ought to be living in a Hampstead villa, rich in the modesty of our wants. On the theatre-running scale, I am a pauper. And I have three plays in hand, none of them more valuable commercially than 'The Dynasts,' which I must finish before my dotage overtakes me, if indeed it has not done so partly already."

Well, if he would not let me go starrng in the provinces, I *would* play Ellie. Surely nothing but an overmastering passion for acting could have commanded persistence such as mine! This time "Joey's" anger was roused. I thought of him as "Joey" because I wanted to play for once Delilah to his Samson. "Joey" hurled Jove's thunderbolt. Here it is:

"You are incorrigible. I told you from the first that H.H. was of no use to you. How can you, at your age and with your reputation as a Siddonian 'heavy,' play an ingenue of eighteen against two women of forty playing off their sexual fascinations for all they are worth? You could do it perfectly well against Mrs. Gilbey and Mrs. Knox, but not against Hesione and Ariadne. And you are quite insensible to the certainty that if you produced the play this winter, the raid at the end of it would become a

real one every time the moon and the weather gave the Germans their chance.

"Your suggestion of Fred and Julia is a brilliant one, and with you as Ariadne, and Ellen O'Malley as Ellie, might be a practical one if the bombardment difficulty could be got over. But that would not suit your plans, though it would suit mine fairly well. I want a much better actress for Ariadne than the part will attract: a hard-working devil, and yet a handsome and authoritative person.

"If I could call into existence, by a wave of my hand, a star play like 'Pygmalion,' all would be better than well. Unfortunately, I can't. What you need is a star play. Mind, I don't mean that you demand a star part. I mean that your situation makes it necessary. There is really nothing between the star system, much as I dislike it, and an endowed theatre. You will have to star: and I must fall back on my old plan of simply publishing my plays, and waiting for the endowed theatre to come along. I am not deserting you: I am only facing the facts. I have as much reason to grab at a production as you or Drinkwater; but it will not pay any of us in the long run to throw away H.H. on a failure—least of all on a half-failure.

"The theatre just now is impossible. You should revive 'Black-eyed Susan.' If Ainley can dance a hornpipe well enough to produce the proper pattern with a pair of diamond buckles, it would delight the Tommies and ruin the carpets with their tears.

"I really don't know what is to be done. I am too old.

"Ever,
"G.B.S.

"12th August, 1918."

Shaw, who loves to see boxing and prize-fighting—is he not a friend of Gene Tunney?—knows how to drive

his punches home: he got in a knock-out blow and our correspondence was counted out.

II

I have often read "Heartbreak House" since those days, and have seen that fine character actor, Cedric Hardwicke, do splendid justice to Captain Shotover. I do not wonder that I wanted to act in it; for in one essential respect it is the greatest of all Shaw's plays. "Joan of Arc" may hold that title in the general opinion. I share it. But I feel sure that this general judgment does not take account of the difference between a great dramatic story, built out of ready-made material, and one made out of material fabricated in the dramatist's own brain. Joan's agony has moved generations of men and women to pity. It can never fail to move them; but the tragedy of Heartbreak House—and tragedy it is—owes nothing to universal popular sentiment. It is the tragedy of the world reeling under the shock of war, of a prophet preaching to people who yawn in his face: a prophet who, despite the yawns, goes on prophesying.

More. I see in Shaw's doubt about the play a sign of disagreement between Shaw's art and his personality. He is a tidy man. His handwriting, his clothes declare it. He likes to make his plays tidy too. And "Heartbreak House" is untidy: untidy as the waste places of the world. It has, however, a quality which exists in no other of Shaw's plays: a quality which only once before an English playwright has contrived to give to the drama he has written. The quality which King Lear has: spaciousness. In "Heartbreak House" there is no stage. It is life speaking from the stage of life, a voice crying in the wilderness.

We go on wandering in the wilderness. Moses' hands grow heavy. The voice grows tired; but it still goes on repeating the message: talking, talking on, as

the curtain descends in "Too True to be Good." Only the least inspired of the evangelists could write a sequel to his gospel.

Youth, still listening, yearns for something more than even Shaw the old evangelist can give it. The young generation stands like a child lost in London streets, so forlorn; brave though the little fellow is, he begins to sob from loneliness. He rubs the tears away with the back of his hand. His dear little face is grimy. The kind policeman bends over him. Where is he going? He sobs for answer. Where does he live? He does not know. And there the little child and the policeman stand: the one not knowing where to lead and the other knowing not where he wants to go. I who pass by yearn to take him to my heart and comfort him. But alas! how am I to tell him where his home is? Come quickly someone, some big boy or young woman—some Bunyan out of Bedford Jail—to take his hand and say: "We'll go along together, be brave, no one is ever lost who has courage in his heart."

Shotover, the Captain, rages up and down the quarter-deck, hurling orders at the crew. The ship is sinking. The crew are distraught. They are so well educated that they disapprove of the orders. They have heard them so often. They want new ones and, whilst they wait for new orders, the ship goes on sinking. Well, well, we can always say that it was the fault of the captain, and that is all the crew can find to say of Shaw. Those men of Athens, what intellectuals they were. Playing skittles with their gods, trying to find new ones by knocking the old ones down.

I feel deeply. My job in life is acting. The job has taught me a lot. Writing is not my business: yet this I know: "Heartbreak House" will live as a grim picture of a war-time world as long as English language lives.

Did some instinct warn me that I must fight tooth and nail to play in "Heartbreak House"? That if I did not, the comradeship of the stage, which had been

so close and has lasted so long between us, would come to an end. Who can say! but with the rejection of my appeal on behalf of myself and Ellie, our long and happy association in the theatre came in fact to an end. Many years after the "Heartbreak House" days, I made one more effort—to get Shaw to let me have his play "Joan of Arc." As I have already told, he came to stay with us, brought the play and read it to me. I begged him to let me play Joan, but it was not to be. I tried hard. I thought I had succeeded. To play the part of Joan I was ready to embark again on the treacherous seas of management. I got the option on two theatres: but Shaw was an older man now; though his brain was as good as ever. He must keep his strength for the work he had yet to do. Another actress—a justly famous one, Sybil Thorndike—was in the fullness of her powers, and was already in management. She could produce the play at once. Shaw would be saved all the inevitable labour which, as he well knew, he must go through once we started on cast and company, scenery, dresses and production. I can sympathise with him and understand, but it made me very sad.

It made the artist in me sad and angry, though it did not mar our friendship. Nothing could do that.

Joan is a peasant girl. Peasants, so writers who live in towns are wont to think, are rough of speech. They are not. Their speech is often more beautiful than any townsmen hear. Their manners are rough. They are not! Peasants are just as diverse in their kinds as any other sort of aristocracy: good, bad or indifferent. There are peasants whose manners make them the peers of kings, and there are peasants as ill-bred as are sometimes people in drawing-rooms. I have lived among them and I know. I shall never forget a scene which I once witnessed. A girl had been rescued from drowning by a fisherman. He heard a voice. It came from the sea, a faint, monotonous wailing voice, almost a whisper: "Help! Help!" He put out in his

boat and brought her, half-drowned and unconscious, to land. How to restore her! It was Sunday morning, church time. No one on the beach. He set off at a run and came to the church, a Catholic church. I saw him coming up the aisle. He stood facing the altar, cap-in-hand, the other hand uplifted. "Pardon," he said, "a drowned girl lies on the beach. Is there a doctor here?" Doctors went. The girl was saved. The fisherman went back to his boat and hauled it up on the beach.

I see Joan as a strong, healthy girl, a peasant. The voice of inspiration comes to her. She sees visions. She is simple. The visions illuminate her life. She remains simple, but whatever she may have had of commonness is burnt away by the flames of her inspiration.

I have seen inspiration do these things. I have walked with banners with the Suffragettes. Some raged, some did silly things, but all, even the silly ones, became better: better-mannered, better-looking, made so by the faith that was in them.

I have watched girls and women and men of the Salvation Army. Common people. I have seen their faces transfigured, eyes shining like the evening star, voices gentle with the gentleness of great love. Roughness and commonness cannot carry the message that they bear. Thus do I see Joan.

I neither know nor care whether Shaw shares this vision. What mother knows all about the child she bears? What dramatist knows all about the children of his brain? None!

Nurses, good nurses, know more about the children than the mothers: and actors, good actors, are the nurses who tend and know the children of the playwright's brain even better than the playwright does. If dramatists knew this they would be saved much well-meant but fruitless labour, and could go about their true business, which is not to make better actors, but to write better plays.

And so, having marched along together all these years, Shaw and I parted company. Shaw back to Methuselah, and I back to things which are yet older: poetry and Greek drama. Yet I remain, dear Shaw, ever your devoted Ellie.

CHAPTER XVI

PRESENT, PAST AND FUTURE

I

I SAT by the sea at Lulworth with Shaw's last letter in my hand, and wondered what to do. The war was still going on. It seemed to me that I had done nothing during all these years and that there was nothing for me to do. Yet I had wanted so much to do what thousands of others of all sorts and conditions were doing: to help. I had asked my friends to aid me to get some work. I had applied to Mr. Asquith to find me a job—in France, anywhere. Other artists had done the work I wanted to do. John Masefield had been with an ambulance in Gallipoli: had written the wonderful story of Gallipoli. He had been to America to tell the United States about the war. I had heard what desperate work it was: that he had gone to tell people about the war. They had puffed their pipes and whistled. He had gone on telling his story, and presently pipes went out and whistling stopped, and everyone was listening in hushed silence.

I had had what promised to be a great opportunity in 1917. Robert Vansittart of the Foreign Office (now Sir Robert) had asked me if I would take a theatrical company to Scandinavia and Russia. Mr. Bjorkman had written from Scandinavia to say that "the time has come to give serious consideration to the proposition for a series of English theatrical performances in Stockholm. With this in mind I have had a talk with Tor Hedburg, director of the 'Kunglia Dramatiska Teaterern.' I found him not only interested but eager, and think it will be possible to arrange brief seasons at Gothenburg,

Copenhagen and Christiania. I regard money spent on a venture of the kind much better placed than similar sums expended on ordinary forms of propaganda."

Here was the chance I longed for. Mr. Drinkwater would be my manager. We set about getting a company together. We would do "Macbeth" with Duncan Grant's production, which had achieved such success in Paris. John Buchan, who was at the War Office, was all for the venture. We would act "Twelfth Night," "The Trojan Women," "Nan," "The Witch," "The Admirable Crichton," and one of Shaw's plays. Then fate intervened. The situation had changed in Norway. The Treasury decided that the venture would cost too much: the North Sea was dangerous. I had to write to Albert Rutherston, who was soldiering in the Isle of Wight and who had promised to design costumes and scenery, that the project had been abandoned.

It appeared to me as I looked back into those years that I had been a sort of strolling player. Had I, whose life had been so filled since I started my career at sixteen, really been doing nothing since 1914? I began to tick off on my fingers the plays in which I had acted and found to my surprise and solace that I had got nothing like enough fingers for the task. That made me all the more eager to do it.

There was Haddon Chambers's play, "The Impossible Woman," which I was rehearsing when war was declared. It was produced at the Haymarket Theatre on the 8th September. I was the world-famous pianiste: artistic temperament, genius, egotist, jealous, jealous of everything and of everybody, even of her adopted daughter. Her friends desert her and only her art remains. In the last act she plays the piano. How I practised playing the concerto over and over again until I knew every note and phrase by heart! How beautifully I played! Everyone was delighted. Unknown admirers as well as friends wrote to congratulate me. I give one letter written at the time:

"Dear Madam,

"I have been present at two performances of 'The Impossible Woman,' and have intensely enjoyed your piano solo at its close.

"Your rendering of this composition is to me the crowning pleasure of a splendid entertainment, and will remain as my standard for the piece, which I shall come to hear as often as circumstances permit. . . ."

Only the other day, I sat beside a Sheriff at a city banquet. We fell talking of the play. "My wife," he said, "exclaimed, after hearing you play the piano: 'Now we know how it is she is such a splendid artiste, combining the art of music with all her other gifts.' " Dr. Johnson, wisest of men, made the confession of his shortcomings in no private ear but in the open market place of Lichfield. I would follow him: shall I let a Sheriff shrive me. No! I smiled graciously. But here I stand in this confessional and declare that the piano was a dummy one. The music was made "off." I hand the evergreen laurel-wreath of praise to the famous artist who deserves it.

There were the performances in aid of war charities. In November, 1914, the first of many was given in the Covent Garden Theatre, and included Masfield's "Philip the King," second only in beauty to "Nan." I was the Infanta. Ricketts designed everything and, with that large generosity which was his, painted and gave me two great pictures in the style of El Greco. They hang on the walls of my house at Boar's Hill and one of them may be seen in the picture opposite page 238.

Then came "The Dynasts" at the Kingsway. Hardy's prologue to that play of ancient wars spoke of the present one:

"It may not be amiss to raise up visions of historic wars which teach the endurance of our ancestors, 'That such reminders of the feats they did may strengthen hearts now strained by issues hid.' "

"The Dynasts," of which Nevinson with his unerring

acuteness observes that "the invisible presence of the countless thousands of massed humanity makes itself felt indefinitely."

But the war was too ever-present to men and women. I do not wonder, as I sit on Lulworth beach and think about it, that "The Dynasts" was, as I have said, a splendid failure. People needed no incentive from the theatre to urge them to heroic heights. They had attained them.

Then America: the Southern route because of submarines. Gloom brooding over the ship, gloom which the presence even of George Grossmith and the Gaiety Company, Fay Compton, Iris Hoey and Leslie Henson could not dispel. Then home again with such a longing for England as I had never known. "This dear, dear land . . . Dear for her reputation through the world."

1916. Performances for the Stage Society of Sturge Moore's one-act verse play "Judith," which the Censor—reacting, perhaps, to the freer manners of war-time, had deigned to license. And in the same year the part of Maude Fulton in Somerset Maugham's "Caroline" at the New Theatre: a happy memory, because of the rippling wit of the play and because of the pleasure of acting with that most delightful of women and actresses, Irene Vanbrugh. Leonard Boyne, too, was in the cast, and I was Irish enough to enjoy his smooth, slippery voice: the softest of burrs, the quiet, feline movements and the astonishing art of using hesitation to enhance the effects of speech. Happy memory also because I felt myself now, at all events in the theatre, on the best of terms with Comedy and revelled in playing Raina's successor, a rival minx and better barefaced liar.

Still in 1916. Still at war. Shakespeare's tercentenary. A great commemoration at Drury Lane, 200 actors and actresses. "The Merchant of Venice" with Ellen—the only Ellen—as Portia, and Marion as Nerissa. "Much Ado," Julia Neilson, Beatrice; George Alexander, Benedict; Fred Terry, Don Pedro, and Gladys—the only Gladys—as Hero. "Winter's

Tale," Mary Anderson, Hermione; no acting needed by her to express the serene dignity of the part: she wears it still with beauty in her retirement at Broadway; Lady Forbes-Robertson, Perdita. "Coriolanus," Genevieve Ward as Volumnia and F. R. Benson Coriolanus. "Twelfth Night," Viola, Lillah McCarthy; Henry Ainley, Malvolio; Evelyn Millard, Olivia, and Leslie Henson as Feste. Do I not well to write these names and to be proud to find my own numbered with them? Do they not show a shining galaxy of assembled stars? Their Majesties in the Royal Box; theatre crowded and Frank Benson, Shakespeare's standard bearer, knighted on the spot.

Still in the same year came the great *matinée* which I organised in the beautiful hall of the Middle Temple, where we played "Twelfth Night." Again Their Majesties were present. Three hundred years had passed since "Twelfth Night" was first played there before the benchers.

July: the Star and Garter building needs help, actors and actresses—all stars—come and give it. Sir James Barrie tells me I may produce "The Admirable Crichton"; Oswald Stoll lends the Coliseum; a record sum for war charity. Artists come to paint us. Laszlo paints Gladys Cooper as Agatha; J. J. Shannon, R.A., Lily Elsie as Lady Catherine and Lavery (now Sir John), me as Lady Mary. All the pictures put up for sale. Mine bought and given back to me. I love Lavery more every time I look at it for having made me so brave, and fearless and so gallant.

I worked hard to get the cast together. Dion Boucicault would produce the play, Gerald du Maurier would play in it. All went well. Suddenly Boucicault could not be producer and du Maurier could not take his part. Bewilderment—what to do? Gerald, who, the less he seems to try, the more he attracts men and women to the theatre! Gerald, of whom brother Dan with his love of learned words said "he would be perfect if he did not suffer from occasional attacks of mummers'

meiosis." I remember Dan saying it. I remember replying indignantly, "I don't know what it is but Gerald is the healthiest man and the best actor I know." "Dictionary," says Dan. He had given me one by now, and I had found it the best present I ever had. I looked it up: "meiosis: a figure of speech representing things as less than they are!" Yes. Gerald, who has set the fashion in men's dress with such admirable results, has led this fashion of stage-craft also of representing things as less than they are. He can do it to perfection but most of his imitators cannot. I hope the fashion may soon change. Underacting! how effective on occasion: how tedious at long last!

Brother Dan. It was the last of his learned witticisms. He had earned a good allowance of fame as an actor, and had caught something of the genial genius of Cyril Maude, with whom he used to act. Retiring upon it he went to live at Ramsgate and become a fisherman: one of that long line of patient men who stand for hours motionless upon the pier, finding no day too long, no catch too small to weary hope. That happy race of men who take delight more in pursuit than in achievement.

But what to do? Must I abandon the play? How to find another Admirable Crichton and get another producer? I must be off to Barrie and ask his help and advice. Stout-hearted man! He has written noble words about courage and has practised what he preached. Abandon the *matinée*? "Nonsense," said Barrie, "carry on." But H. B. Irving has also resigned. "Let him," said Barrie. "Arthur Bouchier will play Crichton." He did. "And if Boucicault won't produce the play, I will do it myself."

Actors and actresses are the most generous people I have ever known, generous to charity, generous to one another. Their code of loyalty to one another is, I think, higher than in any other profession, not even excepting medicine and law, but I must have offended against some article or other of the code which rules

the theatre. Perhaps by getting Barrie to let me produce a play which belonged by right of custom to others. I do not know, but it is all over now and has left no painful memories behind, for this is the slogan of the theatre—note it well, ye politicians—"Never recrim."

The day of the *matinée* arrived, but brought the tragic news of the death of Lord Kitchener. The performance had to go on in the absence of their Majesties the King and Queen. But presently they commanded a second performance, this time in aid of the King George Peelson Fund. The Band of the Coldstream Guards played the "Festival of Empire." Their Majesties the King and Queen came in. The audience rose and joined in the National Anthem as they took their places in the Royal Box.

The cast: George Grossmith, Lord Brocklehurst; Dennis Eadie, Treherne; Hilda Trevelyan, Tweenie. George Robey the stable-boy and Vesta Tilley the page received ovations which they well deserved; for they have genius, that strange possession which makes great even the little things that the possessor does. And Ellen Terry—housekeeper in the play. How the house rang with applause when, after the servants' party in the first act of "The Admirable Crichton," Sir George Alexander, as Rolleston the valet, presented on bended knee a garland of roses to "the darling old housekeeper of the play and our queen of the stage." Donations and receipts for the performance, £8,000 for the Star and Garter Building Fund!

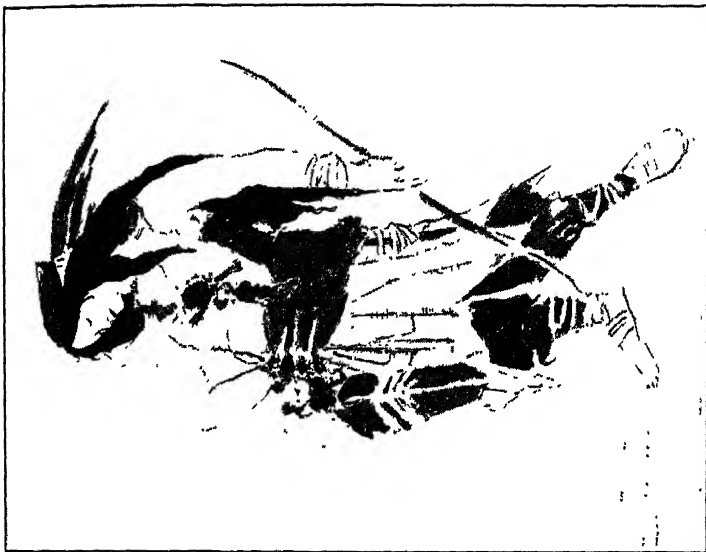
The wonderful costume I wore as Lady Mary may be seen on the opposite page. Ricketts designed it—skins of animals, shells, head-dress of feathers, clusters of wild berries in my hair, "a fine bird of Paradise" Ricketts said. The letter which Ricketts wrote shows what infinite pains went to the making of his genius. He is referring to the dress which I wore in the scene following the shipwreck on the desert island:—



Design by Charles Rickells, R. A.

LILLAH MCCARTHY AS "YGRAINE"
ODETTE GOIMBAULT AS "TINTAGILES"

in "The Death of Tintagiles," by Maurice Maeterlinck,
at The St. James's Theatre in 1913



Design by Charles Rickells, R.A.

LILLAH MCCARTHY AS "LADY MARY"
in "The Admirable Crichton," by Sir James

Barrie, Bart., O.M., at The Coliseum and at
The London Opera House in 1916

"I called yesterday on Mrs. Watts and made some alterations to the dress, shortened the skirt, freed the legs and narrowed the leather over the bust; these, and other corrections are intended to add to height; on this matter take my advice, against that of all others, and keep your hair sleek about the face, and in strands, moistened with vinolia brilliantine, with one long strand over shoulder. When it is fluffed out, it takes from your personality, and from your height.

"If I am not too late, I should advise false heels to sandals or new sandals with heels.

"I want you to be very free of movement with your legs (the dress is designed for that). Do not hesitate to toss your hair about and sleek it with your hands from time to time, it is a charming action. When you put on your necklace and wreath, you should play with your hair; then become absorbed and give a little sigh as you turn to the punka. You must in fact suggest an island Rosalind throughout the act in all your movements, with moments when you are more feminine than Rosalind.

"Be very free with the movements of your head, the other ladies will not. The dress is intended to suggest a rough, active life, the flowers are there because you are in love.

"Don't think me pompous and out of my business when I beg you to remember this even in your hunting speeches, in them be wreathed with smiles; you must listen and fascinate.

"There is danger in the 'Slavey' speech (where you rub your hands). I should advise you to look down and upwards, as if hardly conscious of the words. I am saying this as the size of the stage and audience may have led you and your advisers into too much technique, and the making of points. The other ladies have nothing to do or say, save trust to their popular personalities. You are in love, radiant with health and vitality, but softened by being in

love, when in the former acts you have been dormant and indifferent or thrown upon yourself.

"Forgive this lecture, it grows out of the dress. You were thinking of him when you picked the berries and flowers in your rough dress."

The Italian Red Cross also needs help. Another *matinée*. Alfred de Musset's delicious little comedy: "A Door Must Be Open or Shut." Queen Alexandra comes, and the Italian Ambassador and all sorts of notable people. Ricketts makes me beautiful again and writes paternally, but like a loving father, a letter the postscript of which the actress and the historian of manners may read with interest:

"Holland Park, W.

"I am delighted you like the dress, it will look charming when deployed on the couch and rustle pleasantly when you rise and sail across the room. I think the Mona Lisa touch, charming downward glance with the eyes looking up quite in the right note, a suppressed slyness, delicate archness, very delicate acting is required.

"Make a point of pausing after you say 'Mr. Camus looks quite well—in his gloves.' 'In his gloves' should bring down the house, if said as if you were thinking aloud.

"You should become delicately animated at the end when you have got him on toast over ring, etc.

"Ever sincerely yours,
"C. Ricketts."

"P.S.—Keep hair very sleek and slightly over cheek. Very white make-up and white hands, as yellow tends to redden and darken complexion. The carriage of the hands and pocket-handkerchief was greatly studied in those days, and the hands sometimes clasped in front over handkerchief. Early portraits of Queen Victoria give this. The carriage of the head and neck were also studied, and very

circular. *To-day* all the movements of women are too abrupt and too rapid, and not *gracious* enough."

Now and again between performances there would be little visits to the House of Commons. I would sit in Mr. Asquith's room wondering at the incessant stream of people and papers that came and went, and would say "Should I go now?" and he would reply "No, no, stay and talk to me of your plays and your poetry. It rests and refreshes me for the work I have to do."

Sorrows too fall heavily upon me. A dearly-loved brother dies. Turmoil of war. Asquith falls, and is succeeded by Lloyd George.

1917 came. I was playing in Barrie's "Half-an-Hour" at the Coliseum. Cochran was putting on a triple bill at the Ambassador. Would I play in two of the pieces? "Class" by Robert Vansittart, distinguished diplomatist, poet and playwright, and "The Dumb Wife," in Anatole France's adaption of Rabelais's story "The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife," the first performance to be given in England! I would, but to do so had to move like lightning. "Class" at the Ambassador, then rush across to the Coliseum to do Barrie's "Half-an-Hour," and get it done in twenty-five minutes, so as to fly back again and be a dumb wife. That, at all events, was not difficult, for any woman could be dumb when she was so out of breath as I was when I got back to the Ambassador. Twice a day at the Coliseum and eight times weekly at the Ambassador, twenty performances a week.

The war, like a grim reaper, still stalked the earth. Dear friends had fallen beneath his sickle. Air-raids brought him close to us. October, 1917: I played in Desmond Coke's "One Hour of Life," ominous title, at the Kingsway. I came back from rehearsal to Adelphi Terrace. A crash, flashing light in the sky; the street shining like the river below with the broken glass from all the windows; Adelphi Terrace rocking

upon its arches; a bomb on the Little Theatre and one close to Cleopatra's Needle. I stand in my flat between them, afraid. My mother in her night-dress stands beside me, unafraid. "Come to bed, Lillah, it is all over now." A dresser at the Savoy Theatre, so Horace Annesley Vachell told me, got very angry when the bombs began to fall, turned to him and said: "This war seems to be getting serious, Sir. Don't you think we ought to do something to them there Germans?"

The year draws in. December 1917. Two days before Christmas Mr. Asquith sent me a letter which reveals his fortitude and his solicitude for a friend:

"23 December, 1917.

"You have indeed been scourged by the whips of Time this last year.

"We have just heard that Arthur—our son—was rather severely wounded last Thursday in France. He was hit above the ankle, and has a bad compound fracture; but they hope to save his foot. It was very hard luck, as he had just taken command of his Brigade, and become a General.

"All my love, and my heartfelt wishes for everything that is good and happy for you in this coming year.

"Always your loving,

"H.H.A."

Then in January, Annajanska.

I had sat on the beach so long that the sun is setting when I get up, carried to my feet by the memory of this whirl of work. I remember the little girl, the daughter of a man who lives for work: "Where is Pappsie?" she said. Her mother: "He is working, that's how he gets us cakes and clothes, and everything we have." The little girl made answer: "I hope he'll go on working till he dies."

I will go on working till I die.

I went to the Inn, paid my bill, left Lulworth and returned to London. It was the midsummer of 1918.

II

I went back to London in valiant mood. I knew the difficulties which lay in front of me. I looked at the facts, they were clear enough. I must find work and find it quickly. I would not act in a play unless it appealed to me. I might be a beggar but I *would* be a chooser, proverb or no proverb!

I had always looked upon Mr. and Mrs. Asquith as twin stars in the firmament of my friends. I wrote to him. He answered: "I wish I could give you any effective help; at any rate we can talk matters over, and I will try to look in on you one day this week or next."

The letter was followed by another from Margot inviting me to spend the week-end with them at The Wharf. I told her how I stood, that I felt that there was only one thing to do, to get back into theatrical management again, but that I did not know where to look for money. "Look over there," she said, pointing to the figure of Sir Ernest Cassel, sitting at the other end of the room, "he's the kindest man in the world. Take him into the garden, tell him what you want, and don't let him go till you get it."

Margot led me up to him. I plucked up my courage and said: "May I have a talk with you?" I suppose that men like Sir Ernest know only too well what the talks that people want to have with them are about. They have had so many of these talks. But Sir Ernest smiled and took my arm: did he feel it trembling? We walked into the garden, up and down, towards the house, back toward the river which runs at the bottom of the garden. I told him what I wanted: help, money, in order to produce plays in London. He said very little, listened patiently and then smilingly asked: "How much?" "I want £5,000." "I won't give it you because I have never yet brought luck to any theatrical enterprise which I alone have endowed, but I will give half if you can find someone to do the like."

I went back to London determined to find someone, to get the other half of the £5,000 that I must have if I was to begin management. I sought out Mr. A. E. Drinkwater (John Drinkwater's father). He had been my manager at the Kingsway, and I knew I could rely on the sound sober advice which he would give.

We went together over the names of all likely people and at last he suggested Sir Alfred Mond (the late Lord Melchett). I had met Sir Alfred only once before and knew him very little. Of course, I had heard much about him, for he was one of the most talked about and arresting figures of his time. I knew that Mond cared greatly for art, loved pictures and took an interest in the theatre, that his love of literature had made him become the owner of the "English Review"; but I did not know then what I got to know later when we became close friends, that he took as much pride in having helped to make known John Masefield's "The Widow in the Bye Street" by publishing it in the "English Review," as in any of his more spectacular political and industrial achievements. Nor did I know that Alfred Mond was one of the most versatile men of his time, that his interest in life was unbounded, ranging over all its dominions. One of his greatest friends, also a friend of mine, has often said that "Alfred Mond was one of the greatest men of his time. If, as I have heard said, his political contemporaries did not think much of him it must be because they are incapable of thinking much about anything except, perhaps, their own careers!"

But when I went to see him in response to the invitation with which he answered my letter, I soon discovered that Sir Alfred knew all about the theatre and its powers of losing money for those who try to promote it. But big men do not let facts destroy their ideals. Only little men do that, and that is why, though they may get riches, they get nothing else out of life. Mond teased me a little, but no man admired determination more than he did, and he sent me away with the

remark: "What Sir Ernest does is good enough for me to do. I promise you the money." Alfred Mond was at that time First Commissioner of Works, and, with a cheque for £2,500 in my purse, I said to myself that "his office ought properly to be called the office of good works!"

I had the capital. Next to find the play! Now that I was in a position to put it on the stage would Shaw relent, and let me produce "Heartbreak House"? I wrote and told him of my good fortune and asked him to let me do his play—Ellie was not mentioned in the letter but she was peeping over my shoulder whilst I wrote it. I asked for bread and he offered me an unborn pot-boiler. But there was a world of sense in his letter, and though I did not like it I knew what he said was true. This is what he said:

"5th November, 1918.

"It is evident that there is nothing in it but a syndicate which will finance the production of a new play by me, and finance it sufficiently. But there has never been any difficulty about getting that far. It leaves us just where we were before. The war is not over, the lighting order is still in force, the audiences still consist of Tommies on leave and not of our highbrow congregations, and nothing is improved except that it looks as if the air raids were over at last for good. The failure of the play as a commercial speculation by a syndicate is as nearly a certainty as anything theatrical can be.

"Now a failure would not matter very much to you or to the syndicate. To the syndicate it would be the fortune of war. You would get your bread-and-butter out of it for a few weeks anyhow. I should lose a month's exhausting work at rehearsals, and have a big play killed. It would never revive in London in my lifetime (look at 'Misalliance'!) and its failure would make it very difficult for me to do much with it abroad. You are young, and can jump

from a failure, which is not *your* failure anyhow, to a success or at least to another engagement. But I am old and nearly at the end of my tether; I cannot afford to trifle with theatrical gambles. I should virtually lose five years over a failure.

"If instead of an anonymous syndicate you could get a committee to set you up in a theatre, and give you their names so as to give you a standing like that of the Philharmonic Concerts, and an endowment which would enable you to carry on for three or four years and revive the limited run plan which worked so well at the Court, and made failure impossible, then your difficulties would vanish. But for this syndicate business you must have a pot-boiler, and I have already produced more than my share of pot-boilers, and must at all hazards resolutely finish, before everything else, the three plays with which I am now wrestling, and which will probably be the end of my output.

"I have made the same reply (less intimately of course) to all the others. I have every inducement to work with you, as I should be much more at home in a theatre of yours than elsewhere. I have proclaimed my personal devotion to you before the world by the infamy of 'Annajanska.'

"But as to Barrie and the rest giving you their names as supporters, how can you expect them to do this as long as your backers are anonymous? Give them a list of distinguished members of the committee, and you can fairly ask them to let you publish their names as supporters of your enterprise. But a speculative syndicate, got up for you by your solicitors is all that you have to show at present. And for that it is utterly impossible for any of us to stir outside the usual routine. Provide the right conditions, and they will only be too glad, I should think, to find a shop. Not Barrie, perhaps, for he has found a new house with du Maurier. But Galsworthy, like myself and the rest, is on the Embankment. Even Arnold Bennett, though, like me, he has got at the syndicate

by two huge pot-boilers, is essentially a repertory playwright.

"At the same time, I do not believe in repertory except as a late development of the limited run system.

"Ever,

"G.B.S."

At this juncture, A. E. Drinkwater made another suggestion. "Why not produce the play 'Abraham Lincoln,' which John, his son, had written?" Had I wanted to make money, I should have jumped at the suggestion, but I wanted to act, and though I could play many parts, that of Abraham was beyond my powers, and there was no other part, none at all events for me. I refused.

I spent my days and nights reading plays of all sorts and descriptions. Unknown authors whose plays may reveal that they know nothing else, learn by some mysterious means that you are starting in management. Plays descend upon you like snowflakes on a winter's day, incessant, and alas! they leave you quite as cold. One after the other you read them and discard them—discard them all, and yet perhaps among them there is one which had you but known is capable of being made into a great play. There is no insight rarer than that which can discover the play which will prove successful. William Archer in his latter days wrote "The Green Goddess." He sent it to me after I had given up theatrical management. I found it interesting, no more; but because of our friendship I sent the play to everyone I knew in the theatrical world who would be likely to produce it. One and all returned it with or without thanks. At last it was produced and would have made Archer's fortune, had he lived to enjoy it. Hard-headed manager, actor-manager, playwright, it matters not who he be, not one of them possesses the mental flail which can separate the wheat from the chaff. The surest judge I know is Nigel Playfair (Sir Nigel), whose opinion I would back against that of

anyone else connected with the theatre. Why should this power of judging unknown plays be so rare? If "Macbeth" came anew to us should we recognise it as a great dramatic play, or should we promptly return it by registered post to Stratford-on-Avon?

The summer was passing and no play had been found. In September I went to stay in a country house with Arnold Bennett as one of the other guests. Arnold, whose experience in such things, great as it was, was not always equal to the opinions which he expressed, used to say that plays are easier to write than novels. I remembered the saying, and asked him if he would write a play for me. "I would write a play in no time for you, Lillah, if I only knew what to write it about." I desperately wanted a play "in no time," and told him that I thought the story of Judith and Holofernes provided the material for a magnificent drama. Arnold, whom I supposed had read everything, had never read the story. We went off to the library. No Apocrypha! Rang up neighbours. Not known in the district! At last we asked the housekeeper, a well educated and very pious lady. She had the book, but kept it under lock and key, because she did not think it should be read by young people. We borrowed the Apocrypha and read the story of Judith at a sitting. As soon as it was finished, Arnold Bennett slapped his thigh in a way he had when he wanted to be emphatic, and said, "She'll do. I'll make a play of Judith." With that incredible industry he had Bennett set about making the play. Whilst he was doing it, he sent me another play which he had already written: "Don Juan." It had no part for me. I dallied with it, delaying to tell him that I could not produce the play. My delay offended somewhat his sense of what was due to him. Arnold was punctilious and exacted punctilio from others. When in later years we had become fast friends, I used to spend happy weeks with him on his yacht, "The Marie Marguerite." He was every inch a skipper, could wear his yachting cap at the proper angle, and could maintain

the discipline of the ship as well as any hard-bitten sea captain could. I remember his stern reproof and piteous appeal to one of the other guests, a careless fellow, who after sharpening his indelible pencil, and letting the fragments lie about the clean trim deck, had begun to skip, grinding the dust from the pencil into blue smears. "That's not the way to sharpen pencils and that's not the way to skip," he said, and then and there he showed the offender how both ought to be done.

But his plaintiveness had always a piquant note, and he knew that it amused as well as reproved his friend. The man who wrote "The Card" had a sense of humour both strong and delicate.

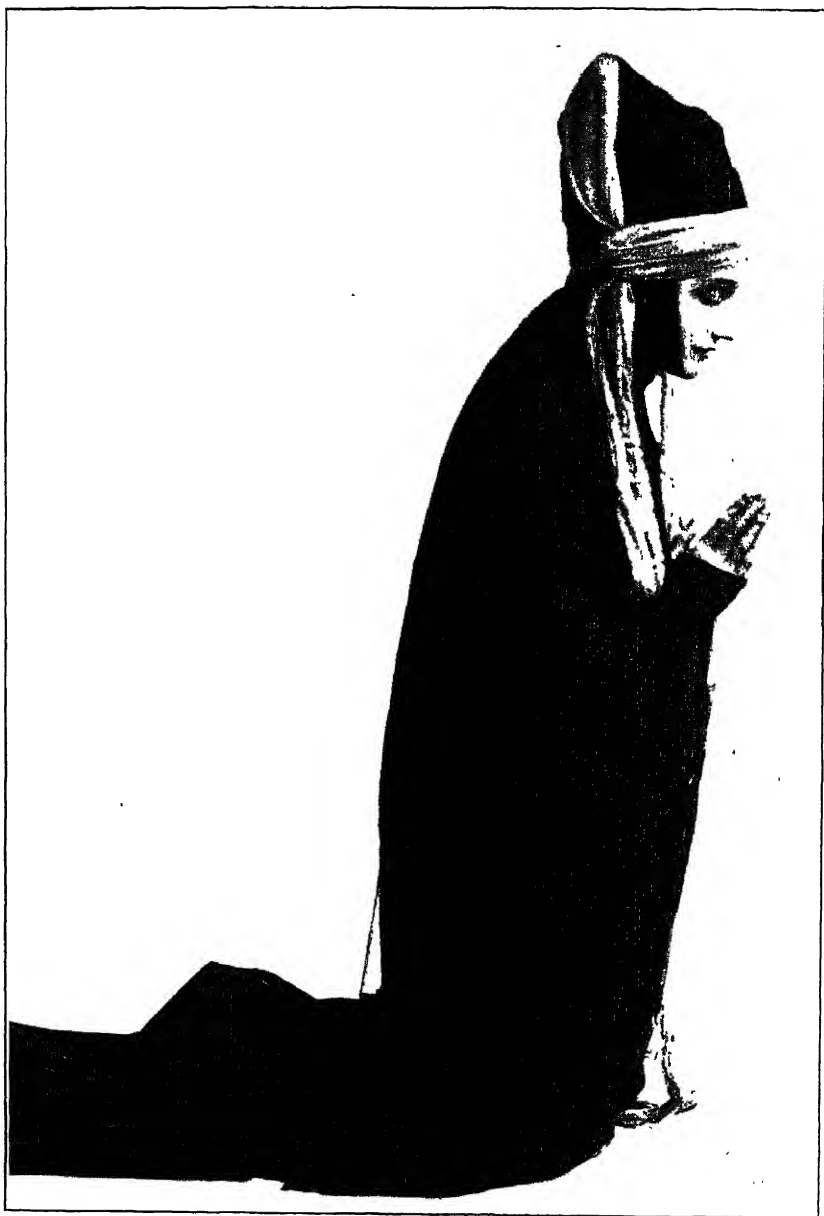
When next we met he reproved me in a prim and plaintive little lecture in staccato sentences shaking my hand at the end of each sentence and finishing up with a jolly laugh: for Arnold *could* laugh. The lecture was on the dilatoriness of theatrical people in general and on one, Lillah, in particular: it dwelt upon the insufficient consideration bestowed by them on playwrights generally and on A.B. especially, and ended with the plaint "I am always being treated in this way by people connected with the theatre. I do not know why it is, but it is so."

A few weeks later "Judith" came. I began reading it with eagerness, but finished it with disappointment. Bennett's treatment of the Judith story seemed to me, and still seems, superb. The tent scene in which Judith pursues by wiles and achieves by courage the destruction of Holofernes, the enemy of her people, is charged with tense drama. But Bennett had not been content to let the Apocrypha story alone. He wove into it another, a romance. Brought in love to soften the terrible asperities of hate, and failed to bring the two motives into dramatic harmony. Though I felt sure my judgment was right, I stood too much in awe of Bennett to tell him what I thought. Instead, I devoted all my energy to getting a fine cast together—

Ernest Thesiger played the part of Bagoas, Holofernes' chamberlain, and never did Thesiger give a finer performance than that of the sinister and treacherous figure. Charles Ricketts designed the costumes and scenery. The first scene was surely one of the most beautiful ever designed—it showed the great bronze gates and towers of the besieged city, and when you looked upon it hunger could be seen stalking through the streets. My dress, as may be seen on the opposite page, in that *City of Sorrows* was composed of every tone of black: brown black, green black, blue and grey black: folded one over the other. The part of Judith moved me greatly, and I threw all my passion into it, but it was of no avail. Friends crowded round me after the first performance filling my ears with congratulations, but I knew that "Judith" was doomed. I can see now that whoever had written it at that time, and no matter how it had been written, the play would still have failed. Numbed feelings the long drawn out war had produced, feelings which had got gradually and imperceptibly to cease to respond. The instincts of people living under a great shadow are to seek diversion and entertainment so that if only for a little moment they may forget their ever-constant cares.

Arnold, too, must have felt that the play was doomed, but he kept a brave face, sent me a charming note of congratulation after the first performance, "Good luck be with you" it said, "you immensely deserve it." Thomas Hardy, always moved by the sight of heroic things, was enthusiastic about the play; but the critics were not. For a week or so Judith hovered between life and death, and then she died as so many heroic souls have died, worn out by privation and neglect.

I, who see the great beauty which the play possesses, ought to seize the occasion to say harsh things about the critics; for had they not helped to hasten Judith's end? A little word of encouragement whispered in her ear by them might, by giving her hope, have saved her



Photograph by Foulsham and Banfield.

LILLAH McCARTHY AS "JUDITH"
in "Judith," by Arnold Bennett, at The Kingsway Theatre in 1919

life, and incidentally the half of my £5,000 now alas! gone. But I cannot say harsh things, and besides, it seems to me as indecent for an actor to protest about the critics as it is for a player to abuse the referee. And so, though they helped to send Charles Ricketts's lovely scenery, the exquisite costumes that he designed along with the fine acting of the cast the way to dusty death, I can only say in the concluding words of Arnold's letter to me: "Peace be with you." Others more learned in the art of dramatic criticism, must, if they think that critics do not know their business, show them how to learn it. For of this I am sure, good actors and good playwrights can only excel under the stimulus of outspoken criticism. "Bashers," like the one at Malvern, who went to "bump off" Shaw's play, there will always be: they have to earn a living somehow; but the real critics—Walkley, who was, and Charles Morgan who is the dramatic critic of *The Times*, Desmond MacCarthy, learned, brilliant and fair as a summer day, James Agate, Ivor Brown, St. John Ervine, S. R. Littlewood and others whose work I know but whose names I know not—are just as necessary to dramatic art as are good playwrights and good actors.

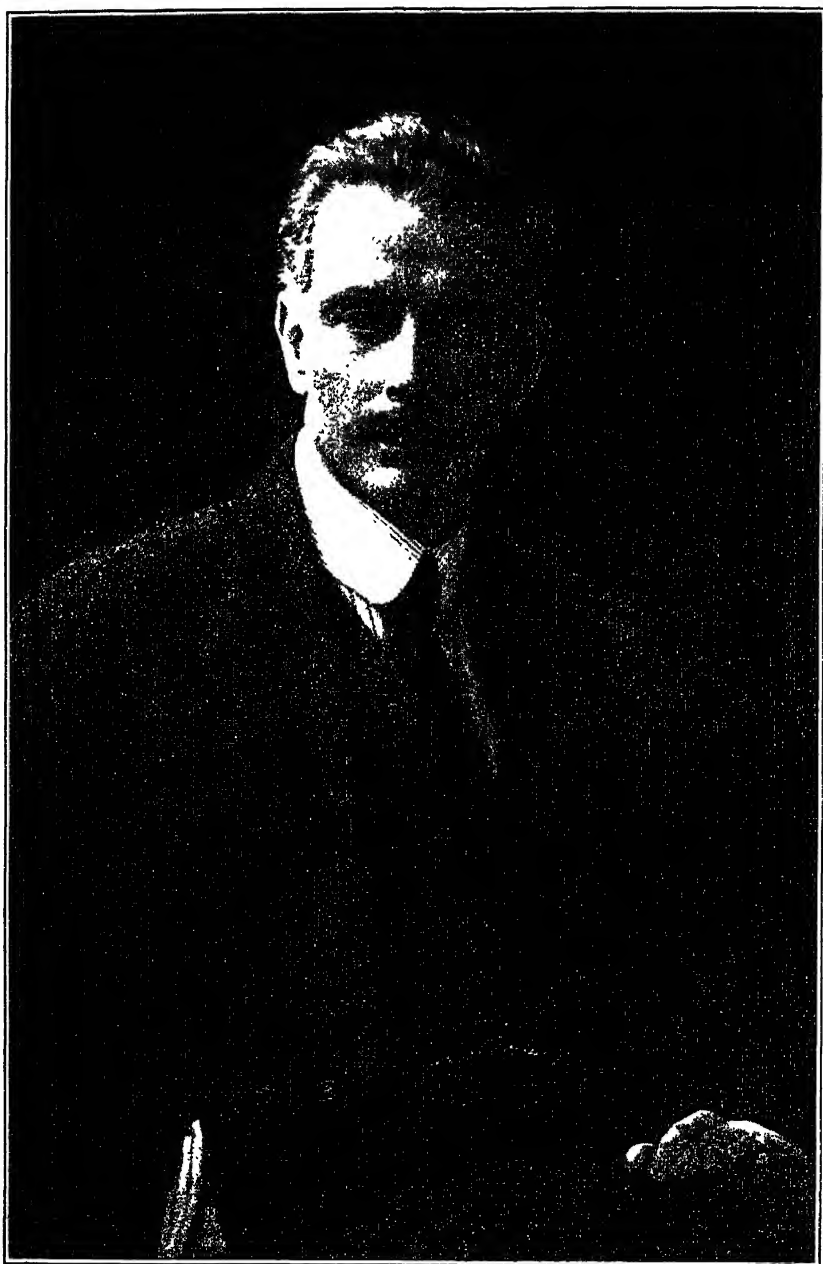
In any case, half my capital was gone.

Shall I seek about for another play, another drama, or shall I try to swim with the tide by producing something likely to attract a war-weary people? Drinkwater brought me a simple, amusing, well-constructed play, "St. George and the Dragon," by Eden Phillpotts. I determined to risk my remaining capital on it. The cast which we chose was a brilliant one: Nicholas Hannen, Meggie Albanesi, Jean Cadell, Ernest Thesiger, Mary Brough, and Claude King. But even their fine acting could not keep the play running long enough to give it a chance of growing into success. St. George who had never failed England, failed me. The Dragon swallowed up the remainder of my £5,000 of capital.

III

Some little time before I produced "Judith" there was a question of some charity matinée. In company with Evelyn Weeden (Evelyn Knight Bruce) I paid a visit to Windsor to see the Private Secretary to the Queen. From Windsor we went to Stoke Poges Golf Club, which Lord Cecil Manners, an old and ever faithful friend, had made me join. Tired and somewhat dispirited we went in to dinner. The room was empty, save for one other person dining there. We sat at the table with him and began to talk casually, languidly. He said something of the beauty of the Yorkshire moors—he spoke with enthusiasm. I had been looking for it everywhere. I brightened up. He brightened up. I knew every yard of England, so did he. He loved the Cotswolds, which I knew so well: light, so clear and yet so soft falls on no other part of England. He knew the poets and loved poetry. So did I. We talked the whole evening. In the morning when I went down to breakfast the man turned up again. Mr. Lane Jackson, who owned the club and whose guest he was had told me that they were great friends, had worked and played together. He was a well-known man of science, now working at the Food Production Department.

We started talking again. I liked the sound of his voice, and it was quite clear that he liked mine. Somehow, I know not how, we found ourselves in the same carriage on the way to London. My mother came to meet me at Paddington and I introduced him to her. He spoke to her charmingly. What he said made her smile. "Ask him to your party to-night, Lillah," she said. I wonder if she could read my thoughts which I couldn't read myself. I asked him. He came. I felt very glad—he seemed very happy. "A nice boy," my mother said, when he went away. "How can you call him a boy?" I exclaimed, "he must be getting on



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SIR FREDERICK KEEBLE, F.R.S.

for fifty." "Good boys get better as they get older," she said. "He's going to ask you to marry him." "Nonsense!" I answered. And then all of a sudden I began to wish he would. Within a week he did. And I promised to marry him.

The first visit we paid after the decision was taken was to The Wharf. I wanted the Asquiths to be the first to know, but I had not counted upon the intelligent anticipation of impending events which Crowther, the butler at The Wharf, showed when he announced us as "Dr. and Mrs. Keeble." Those who knew us laughed, but Margot quickly put us at our ease, and won my heart all over again by the kindness which she showed to us. Gossip flew off straight away to Shaw, who sat down and wrote to me:

"I am told on first-rate authority," he wrote, "that you led Keeble captive down to The Wharf, and introduced him as your affianced. Also that he captivated everybody there. *And you told me that it was all nonsense. . . . What is the truth now?* Do you think Charlotte would like him? You know how shamelessly she prefers people's husbands to their wives."

Israel Zangwill, when he heard I was marrying a man who, among other things, is a great gardener, wrote: "Marriage with such a connoisseur of orange blossom seems symbolic of happiness." Neville Lytton offered me condolences for marrying a "bulbmonger," and Arnold Bennett, the day before our marriage, sent me a written message to say, "If you see a pale cloud hovering over the parson's hand, it will be my soul watching benevolently."

But of all the kindnesses we received that which most warmed my heart was from my Controller's oldest and dearest friends Lina and Otto Gutekunst. They took us to Biarritz for our honeymoon, and there I learned to love them as my Controller does, and as all who know them must.

CHAPTER XVII

THE HAVEN UNDER THE HILL

I

THE time which elapsed between our first meeting at Stoke Poges and our marriage was short but eventful. I acted at the Coliseum in a sketch by Barrie, "Seven Women," and I played the leading part in London in Zangwill's "Too Much Money," but the roles which my scientist played during this period were so varied as quite to bewilder me. When I met him first he was a Controller in the Food Production Department, a temporary war post. His permanent occupation was that of Director of the Royal Horticultural Society's Gardens at Wisley. The war was over, and the question which vexed his mind was, should he go back to the sylvan retreat of Wisley and cultivate his or rather the Society's Garden, or should he remain as long as they would have him helping to organise small cultivation in England? We used to pay occasional visits to the Gardens at Wisley. Their loveliness and peacefulness allured us. Yes! we would settle down there, and there we would end our days. Then suddenly my Controller became an Assistant Secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture. Peaceful Wisley faded out of the picture and Whitehall Place appeared in its stead. But those post-war days were curious days. Hopes raised high during the war were beginning to fade as Wisley had faded. The hopes of helping to build a new world well ordered and well directed were dying of the lassitude which the war had left. Everybody wanted peace. There had been great scope for energy and initiative

in the Civil Service during the war. Those who delighted in power could help themselves to it, and those who possessed initiative were encouraged to exercise it. But as the days of peace slipped by, it became evident that the official world was going to resume its more decorous pre-war ways, and that there would be soon no place for energetic pike in the placid carp pond. My Assistant Secretary saw what was coming and determined to leave the Civil Service which he had so recently joined. He went to Lord Lee, who had become Minister of Agriculture, and told him. But almost at the same moment my out-of-work scientist was elected to a Professorship in the University of Oxford with a Fellowship at Magdalen thrown in. Then at last the part which I was to play was handed out to me: wife of an Oxford Don.

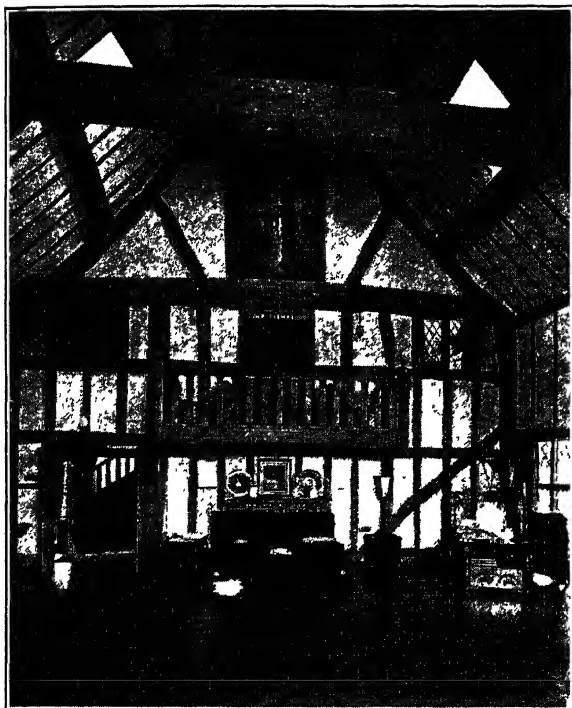
Thus it was that after our marriage we set out to explore the ancient City and University of Oxford. Our first business was to find a house. Surely there would be no difficulty about that! Is not the University of Oxford famed throughout the world for the beauty of its buildings? Is it not famed also as the home of the greatest of British architects, and one of the greatest of men—Sir Christopher Wren? There, if anywhere in England, all round Oxford must be well-built and well-proportioned houses, models which all the rest of England will hasten to copy! Light-heartedly we began our search, but we were soon to remember that we were living in the days of the house famine, due to the interruption of building during the war. Day after day and week after week we searched Oxford and all about it, and as the days began to pass our spirits began to fall lower and lower. We had nearly thirty square miles which we might explore; for according to the University Regulations a Professor may reside anywhere within three miles of Carfax. We were perhaps fastidious; I had enjoyed for many years living in a delightful old farmhouse at Stanstead in Kent, and I still luxuriated in the grace and spaciousness of the

Adams' Adelphi Terrace. My Professor vowed that as he had spent twelve of the best years of his life in a semi-detached villa in a monotonous street in a provincial town, with a garden of the shape and little more than the size of a coffin, he *would* have a decent house at last; and we must have a garden. Search as we would we could find none, and finally in despair and against the advice of all our friends, we made up our minds to build a house. We bought a field—a rough grass field—one of three fields known since Saxon times as the Hamels. The field lies with a southerly aspect on the side of Boar's Hill and looks across to the Berkshire Downs. We got Mr. Imrie, the architect who had built the beautiful laboratories at Wisley, to come to see it. He came and told us of a barn, a great barn one hundred and twenty feet long, standing derelict somewhere in Herefordshire. It could be had for a song and would make a perfect shell for a picturesque house. We went to see it and fell in love with the barn, with its great oak beams and grey stone tiles; a last relic of the once great estate of Burghope. We bought it for the song: the last song of the kind we enjoyed for many a day. Mr. Imrie drew the plans. There was to be at the one end a large hall with gabled roof, timbered with the great beams, and the half-timbers of the barn would serve for panelling the walls. There would be an ingle-nook in which, in years to come, we would sit nodding one on one side, the other on the other, warming our old bones by the great log fire. All along the south side of the big room there would be a loggia, a sun-trap, where, after the Professor's arduous work was over we might bask in the rays of the westering sun. There was no road to the field on Boar's Hill—we must build a road a hundred yards or more down the steep hill and up again to the house. It won't cost much. We must sink a well: that can be done whilst the house is building. We must have an engine for electric light: a mere bagatelle. We must put in an up-to-date

drainage system: another bagatelle; and, of course, we must lay out the garden. There shall be terraces retained by the delightful grey stone from the quarries at Cothill nearby. The terraces must run like bastions all along the south side of the house; all manner of rock plants must be set in the crevices between the stones, and below the terraces there will be a series of little orchards, all enclosed in a hornbeam hedge which will serve as a screen shutting off the kitchen garden: a green screen in summer and a brown one in winter. We must get together collections of trees and flowering shrubs against the time when the ground is ready for planting. And so to work. Of course in those days no builder could give an exact estimate of cost; but what did that matter? We were going to live a simple life in a barn and that couldn't prove expensive. The barn was taken down from the place in Herefordshire in which it had lived for so many centuries, put on rail, each timber numbered, and brought in safety to Boar's Hill. There in the field the great beams lay exposed to all weathers whilst the foundations of the house were being dug. One of the leading ladies of Boar's Hill saw them there. "Oh! my dear Professor," she cried, "do you know that all that lovely wood is lying rotting in your field. What are you going to do about it?" "Live in it," said the Professor. Then began the work of erection. The great beams, hard as iron, must have the sap wood hacked off them. Carpenters came and blunted their tools and left, relays of them, without making any impression on the beams, until at last the resourceful Imrie brought ship's carpenters from Southampton to hack off the sap wood and shape the beams. All through the rainless summer of 1921 the work went on, and at last the great gaunt framework was all in place. Visitors came, even from Oxford, to see the strange monster which reared itself up like the whitening bones of some stranded whale's skeleton. One of the visitors, Sir Walter Raleigh, to be lost all too soon by Oxford and the world, gave praise which

heartened us. Raleigh was one of those rare critics who *did* know how to praise; and one who, wherever he went, made men happier by his presence. "We were building a house which would be the most beautiful of its kind in England," he said. Another came. "How do you like it?" we asked. "It gives me the creeps," he replied, "but it may be all right when the walls are papered." A third set of visitors came later, relatives of her who had so kindly warned us of the rotting of the beams in the field. As they walked round the big room, one of the party kept probing with a penknife into the gaping cracks of the great beams. When he gouged out a little wood dust, he would glance significantly at his companion. I could read his lips. "Worms," they said. The foreman on the job who, like the fine craftsman he was, had grown proud of the work he was doing, must have been able to read them too, for he remarked absently, "That's strange: there were none before you came." The penknife was put away.

The great Horsham tiling slabs were put in place upon the roof, but time had dealt hardly with many of them, and the rest of the roof had to be patched with old red tiles: an harmonious patchwork of grey and dull red which gave us the more pleasure when we discovered that the same patching had been done hundreds of years before on the roof of Anne of Cleves' house at Lewes in Sussex. A well was sunk: no water came. The road began to eat up endless loads of stone; the terraces and forecourt devoured yet more. Wise friends who came told us of our folly to go on building at such a time. "Cut your losses," the wise ones said. We sunk another well, and at last when we pumped the pump sucked up some watery mud, and watery mud it kept on spouting out day after day. But my Professor has streaks of practical genius in him, and Mr. Allsebrook, who was sinking the well, is full of resource, and so between them they designed a fine wired copper filter, put it down the well and went on pumping.



GARDEN ROOM AT
"HAMELS," BOAR'S
HILL, OXFORD, 1925

Showing the Crucifix-
ion painted by Charles
Ricketts, R.A. for
"Philip II" by John
Masefield.

Photograph by
R. L. Warham, F.R.P.S.



Photograph by R. L. Warham, F.R.P.S.

"HAMELS," BOAR'S HILL, OXFORD, 1925

Presently the muddy water became less turbid and at last gushed out clear as crystal.

But all this time our savings were dwindling and the bills were growing. The mote of apprehension was getting bigger than any beam of the house. Something had to be done to help to pay the bills. Then most opportunely Matheson Lang asked me to play with him in Temple Thurston's "The Wandering Jew." I became once again an artless and innocent maiden. Thanks to Lang's fine acting and to something fascinating in the story, the play had a long run, and each Friday night when I drew my salary, which was a generous one, I would say to myself, "This is a new way of raising money from the Jews."

At last in the autumn of 1921 the house was finished, at least sufficiently for us to live in. We moved into it.

We had thought to name the house "Burghope" after the estate from which it came, but a dream which I had made us change the name. The first night I passed in the barn I slept in one of the least unfinished rooms. It had great timbers overhead, and whilst I slept I dreamed that a great giant came out from behind the beams and said, earnestly but kindly: "Nor BURGHOPE; NO, NOT BURGHOPE." So we named it "Hamels."

It was not till some years later that I learned the story of the tragic violence which had attended the last days of the great Herefordshire estate of Burghope whence the barn had come. A few months after we had moved into the house Rosita Forbes with her husband, Colonel McGrath, came to stay with us. As we sat talking, I told her laughingly of my dream. It so happened that she had the dream-haunted room. Rosita, who had faced and surmounted with undaunted courage the real dangers of the desert, confessed next morning that she had found the imaginary terrors too much for her, and had not slept a wink all night. It was in early winter near Christmas that the house was finished. "The Wandering Jew" was finished, and so

were our resources. I came down from London and went into the big room with its great timbers. A log fire was burning in the ingle-nook. The crescent moon was shedding its pale light through one of the little dormer windows in the roof. The room was almost bare; a great holly bush was reaching up to the cross trees, and the evening star setting in the west shone through the large mullioned window. That moment will remain with me all my life; it showed me beauty such as I had never seen before; it paid for the loss of all our savings. I knew then that we had been wise in being so foolish, and that Imrie, the architect, had made something that would be a perpetual delight to me and to generations after I was gone. House, garden, terraces and orchard, lily pond and swimming pool, Boar's Hill sheltering us from the North, Bagley Wood warding off the East winds, and away to the South and the West the soft outlines of the Berkshire Downs: Who shall count the cost of priceless things?

During all these months my friends used to insist that I had left the stage. I had not. I never shall. Edmund Dulac, whom I often met in company with Charles Ricketts, Charles Shannon, Isidore De Lara the composer, at the weekly luncheon parties which the late Princess of Monaco used to give at Claridge's, helped in a charming manner to encourage the belief that I had retired from the stage. He depicted with that superb sense of line he has my departure from the theatre. There am I, as the frontispiece shows, led away by Eros, who by the way, looks no more like a professor than the original, and there is Melpomene, tragic muse, weeping as I go. She smiled on me long years ago on the Cheltenham Hills, and she shall smile on me yet again. For these years that have elapsed since I went to live at Boar's Hill have not quenched but have quickened my love of acting, and they have taught me many things that an actress must know, if she would aim at becoming supreme in her art. It is not vanity but knowledge that makes me say that the

years that I have passed on the heights of Boar's Hill by showing me many sides of life which I never saw before, have made me a better actress than I was in the hey-day of the Court Theatre, for they have made the two sisters, Tragedy and Comedy, equally my friends.

The quickest of these experiences which the peaceful days on Boar's Hill have brought me have come curiously enough not from the world of people, the world that teaches most, but from the world of plants. Like my mother, I had always loved flowers, but as most people do, I had taken them for granted. They lived in nosegays and I never thought of any life that they might have of their own. They are beautiful because they cannot help it. Like Topsy they "just grow." But my Professor, though I will say this for him, that he never tried to instruct me, taught me wonderful things about plants. I discovered that the practised eye can tell at a glance whether a plant is happy or not. If it is healthy it is happy, and if it is not it is unhappy, and shows it by its dejected air. We would walk round the garden; "she is not well," he would say pointing to some plant or other, "she needs a change," and up the plant would come, root and soil and all, to be put forthwith with proper care in some other place in the garden. I would ask, "How is the patient getting on?" "Come and see." And surely enough there would the transplanted plant be, sitting up in its new bed with shining countenance. I pondered these things. They seemed at first absurd. The books that I had read and the good old gardeners that I had asked used to say "the plant resents disturbance." "What have you got to say to that?" I demanded of my Professor. "They only want them to die happy," he said, "and it can't be done. Nothing dies if it's happy. Things only die to get out of their misery." "Some day," he continued, "everybody will know that unhappiness is a kind of starvation, a lack of the proper sort of food, the special diet for happiness, and they will come to see

unhappiness for what it is, a signal of starvation." "Do you think this is true of men and women?" I would ask. "Of course it is," he would say; "it's true of individuals and it's true of nations. Look at those wintry brown South Downs, how famished for food! Look at this apple tree with its scabby leaves, and see how the hornbeam hedge shades it from the sun. It is starved, starved of sunlight. Give it what it lacks, and all its scabbiness departs."

Yes, I learnt many things about men and women from plants. I began to be sorry that so many writers who live in towns and write in rooms never seem to have had the chance of discovering from plants how to understand themselves, and I would wonder whether it was only Chatterton among writers who suffered from the effects of starvation. Solomon was wise because he knew all about plants. Did he not speak of them all, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that springeth from the wall? And did not a wiser than Solomon tell us to consider the lilies of the field, how they grow?

And so like a ship after long and eventful voyages, often storm-tossed, sometimes becalmed, I ran for and found shelter in the Haven under the Hill. Within this shelter I grew stronger and wisdom who crieth in the market place and no man heedeth, came singing with the nightingales in March, and smiling with the hawthorn buds in May, till I could hear her voice all the year round and sometimes even give heed to it.

Five years were spent in digging ourselves in in the garden on the southern slope of Boar's Hill, and during that time I played the part of gardener's boy. I used to watch with impatient eye the trees and shrubs which we planted, and it seemed to me that they were all Peter Pans, and never could grow up. The hedges were only a foot or so high and never grew any taller. The trees were so small as to give neither shade nor shelter. I remember how they tried and failed to give some privacy to the meeting between Lady Oxford



Photograph by J. R. V. Johnson, "Oxford Mail."

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW
in the garden at "Hamels," Boar's Hill, Oxford, 1932

and Sir Alfred Mond when these politicians came to discuss, idealists as they were, the prospects of reunion between the scattered and hostile remnants of the Liberal party. Had there been one sheltered glade in the whole garden the fate of the Nation might have been different. There was at that time none, and Margot and Alfred all too soon got tired of walking about in the sun and gave up hope of making all Liberals love one another. Nevertheless, I discovered on that occasion a magnanimity which I had not hitherto suspected in Margot, for whereas Mr. Asquith (Lord Oxford) was unable to appreciate at their true worth the great abilities of Sir Alfred Mond, Margot with surer insight both recognised and acknowledged them.

During these first years of my professorial epoch, Mr. Asquith was living in retirement at Sutton Courtney only a few miles away, and would often bid us come to see him at The Wharf. Margot also, bright and sudden as a meteor, would sometimes shine upon our lives. Nearer still lived the Masefields. So soon as our house was finished John must come and carve his name on the minstrels' gallery in the big room, and there the initials are to remind me, now that he is leaving us, how much his presence helped to make our life on the hill a happy one.

Boar's Hill, as we soon discovered after we went to live there, offered in those days ample opportunity for those who love to live the simple life. Our house might have been built in the backwoods of America, so far as material amenities are concerned. There was, and still is, no public water supply. The lucky ones among us, and they are few, have deep wells which give a constant supply. The less fortunate have shallow wells, always threatening to fail in dry weather. There was, in those days, no public lighting, neither gas nor electric light; but what enterprise could not undertake, competition can, and now we have both. Electricity came first and dug up our roads, gas followed

and dug them up again. There was, and is, no public drainage, and all the water from the south side of the hill, after filling the half-choked ditches which should lead it to the Thames, drains down into our village of Bayworth. I wonder whether the responsible local authority has ever taken a walk—or swim—in Bayworth in the wet weather. Perhaps it has, and has not survived the adventure! I am told that this primitive state of affairs may be discovered elsewhere throughout this royal realm of England. . . . So far as I can remember, the only public services we could, with certainty, rely on were the regular presentation of demand notes for rates and taxes and an increase in our assessment. Yet these drawbacks, if drawbacks they be, were mitigated by the society which congregated on Boar's Hill. It is true that Lord Berkeley, who had built in instalments representative of many styles of architecture, a sort of baronial castle, had left us for the historic castle of Berkeley, but we had among us the late Poet Laureate, Robert Bridges, and his successor of whom I have spoken so often, because I think so much of him, John Masefield.

It was indeed astonishing to learn how authorship thrives on Boar's Hill, astonishing till the hill taught me that nothing stagnates there. As Warde Fowler once observed, this bluff of land marks a division—the warmth of the South reaches just so far, so that we are Southerners; whilst bleaker Oxford lies just beyond the reach of the South. But yet southern though we be, we have the blustering, genial south-west gales and the keen north wind for our tonic and our stimulus. Sun and wind make the flowers grow and writers blossom. The sun and wind tolerate no pharisees, and so all of us who live on Boar's Hill must sooner or later become scribes. The Hon. Mrs. Dowdall, whose fertile pen has delighted so many readers, is one of our nearest neighbours. Mrs. Harrisson, the artist, some of whose pictures hang upon our walls, is another neighbour, and her mother, Mrs. Grierson, with whom

she lives, although she does not write, is one of the most genial and kindly critics in a society which is a connoisseur of kindly criticism. Mr. Patterson of Trinity, who writes biographies, lives within a stone's throw, and in those years Clifford Kitchin was already shaping the delicate irony which presently took form, and such delightful form, in "Streamers Waving." Kitty Everest, the authoress and one of my most loved friends, would always be busy, when staying with me, writing a new novel—except when visitors who knew her infinite capacity for romancing interrupted her and made Kitty tell their fortunes, which if not to their liking had to be retold till they were.

Journalism as well as literature—if there be a distinction between them—was represented, and represented brilliantly by Mr. Bretherton, who as Algol, devotes his fertile and facile pen to the entertainment of readers of the *Evening News*, and who, shrouded in anonymity, describes in his weekly articles in *Punch* the doings, or should it be the talkings about the doings of our legislators! A strenuous as well as a delightful man Mr. Bretherton! Up before daybreak: rattling down to Oxford in an old car which none but he could start, catching a train to London in the early hours—the car left to take care of itself in some odd corner till his return at night. No sooner seated in the train than Bretherton would open out his typewriter and tap, tap, it would go all the way to London turning out witty poems and wise comments: a tribute at once to his powers of work and to smooth running of the trains of the Great Western Railway. Then back to Oxford and Boar's Hill in the evening just in time—at least in spring, summer and autumn—to spend a few hours weeding, watering and propagating the amazing collection of plants which jostled one another in his garden.

They all lived on the heights. I lived at a lower level, and yet, as this book testifies, even I at last with hesitating pen have joined the busy company of the scribes.

We had in those days as our chief place of reunion

an occasional 'bus. It was for us what the market place was for Athens. Gossip had a free seat there, and used to tell all of us who frequented it the Boar's Hill news: what household had at last been able to secure a servant, and why that rare bird of passage lingered so briefly in our midst. I had lived so long in towns and read so many books by clever men that at first I thought disdainfully of gossip, but I soon discovered that though she took up so much room in the 'bus, she is a delightful companion: a wireless of the countryside. She was especially welcome in the winter months, for then life on Boar's Hill is apt to go into cold storage. Unlit roads, which in those days had no footpath, kept us at home of nights; but in summer we would all emerge from our retreats, give each other tennis parties and bathing parties; we could take our choice—mixed bathing in the lake which Sir Arthur Evans had built, separation of the sexes and regulation of the extent of our bathing-costumes in the more decorous pools which Mr. Robey had made for our delight. We were and remain a sylvan community. In the spring there would be bluebell parties. I once gave one. The visitors were Londoners: a mayor or so and other civic functionaries. They had seen our garden, and with increasing laggardliness were being taken to see the bluebells in Bagley Wood. One of the party chanced to be walking with the Professor, whom he did not know. As they trailed along, he asked with a world of pathos in his voice: "Do you care for this sort of thing?" "It's my trade," the Professor said. "I suppose you make them into jam?" the visitor queried.

It was after this evidence of the distastefulness of "nature study" to some town-bred folk that we invented our now famous and popular way of showing the garden to visitors. Flights of stone steps descend from the upper terrace near the house. Below the terrace a path joins them and leads away to other parts of the garden. A grey stone wall, full of rock plants,

supports the terrace. We descend one of the flights of steps and pause before a favourite rock plant in the wall, a lovely little thing with grey and downy leaves, the dittany of Crete, a perfect if modest gem which Bidder gave us, and one which Sir Arthur Evans when he comes to see us recognises and always stops to admire. The party is halted before it, and if this plant test of endurance is approved, the tour goes on; but if there is a vacant stare and a bored asking of "which one?", we promptly mount the fellow-flight of steps, regain the upper terrace, and the party subsides thankfully into *chaises longues* in the loggia. There is no more popular garden than ours in this round world; at all events among those who like gardens in small doses.

Many of the plants of the garden are souvenirs of the multitude of friends who had helped us make it. Mr. Baker, the Superintendent of the beautiful Oxford Botanic Gardens, who takes an almost paternal pride in ours, has enriched it with many rare and lovely plants. Bidder, who loved to come to see us, would always take me aside and say: "Yes, my dear, in thirty years you will have a garden—propagate, propagate, that is the way to make one." Yet every time he came, he would bring some treasure of the rock garden from St. John's College and insist on planting it with his own hands. "Professors," he would say, with a chuckle, "may know plants, but know nothing about planting." Miss Ellen Willmott would come and walk and talk the whole day long, but her talk would always be worth listening to. She would recognise every plant that was growing and see everywhere places which, as she said, "were yearning to give welcome to others." Then off she would go, tramping all the way to Oxford if we would let her and presently a great untidy bundle of rare plants would come from Warley Place, where she lives.

As money is said to attract money, so poets attract poets. There would come from time to time to sojourn among us one or other of the younger generation—it

might be Robert Graves, though I fear he has carried away but a sorry souvenir of us all. Perhaps the kindness which the Hill tried to show him was so gauche as to be irksome. I remember what was perhaps his last incursion before saying goodbye to all that. It was a dismal day and as the Professor sat in his book room writing, the door opened and a drenched figure appeared. The rain dripped on the carpet from hat and coat and trousers. It was Robert Graves. Out from Iffley with wife and child and dog, Graves had climbed Boar's Hill in a one-horsed caravan. The rain descended, the dog turned back; but the old horse stumbled on and reached the top of the Hill. Graves had come to ask a night's bivouac in our field.

"If your horse gets down, it will never get back," said the Professor, and Graves departed to outspan at the top of our steep lane.

With so many bright sources of illumination both constant and intermittent, we never felt the lack of electric light or gas, and although the local authorities passed us by, authority lived among us in our distinguished residents and visitors. Explorers there were and are among us as well as poets; Sir Arthur Evans and Campbell Thompson who have discovered, one the cradle of civilisation in the Mediterranean, the other the secrets of Nineveh.

From the first day of our meeting, I learnt to admire the remarkable and reserved genius of Sir Arthur Evans. He is known to the world at large as a great archæologist. He has rediscovered Cretan civilisation. On a casual walk from the Cretan Hills to the sea his discerning eye will recognise that there lies the great Cretan port, the harbour of all the world's shipping in those far-off times. Few, however, know what fine work he has done unobtrusively and almost unregardedly for this our encampment on Boar's Hill. Year by year the boy scouts spend their summer time in the woods about his house. In his grounds he has erected the most beautiful and most beautifully inscribed

war memorial I have ever seen. He has done all that he can do to help our water famine, not to give us drink, but at all events to let us bathe. He has built a great lake wherein all Boar's Hill can disport itself. Sir Arthur Evans has done more, far more, than anyone else to preserve the land on Boar's Hill from the dreadful enterprises of the builder. It is true the builder has been before him and has contrived every conceivable banality of construction and more than one inconceivable, but where he could save the land from this hugger-mugger and starkly ugly exploitation he has done so. Latest of all his enterprises and good works is to lay out some of the land which he has purchased as a public garden, and in the midst of it to build a great mound made by excavating a lake. Jarn Mound he calls it, a sort of sugar loaf from the top of which exquisite and far-off views are to be had all over the Berkshire Downs. I told him one day how I admired the work which he was doing on Boar's Hill. A smile, a little sad, lit up his shy face as he answered: "You are the first who ever told me so." We are austere on Boar's Hill. English, we hardly ever tell our love, and so I tell now the warm admiration I have for Sir Arthur Evans, no less great in the lesser things than in the big things which he does.

Over on the next ridge towards Oxford lives a no less public-spirited man, Colonel ffennell. All those who love energy and admire helpfulness hold him in affection and esteem. He has rebuilt his village and has helped to save much land from the builders' grasp. When Colonel ffennell first came to live amongst us after he had bought Wytham Abbey, he found the house still tenanted, and so he erected several great tents in which he and his family lived for several years. How I envied him, for I would rather live in a tent than in any house, except a barn. By the generosity of these two men, Sir Arthur Evans and Colonel ffennell, the somewhat languid air which those who live in Oxford breathe is given at least a chance of occasional

refreshment when the westerly winds blow over Boar's Hill and Cumnor Heights. The Oxford Preservation Trust has aided in consolidating this good work, thanks to which Oxford is for ever saved from becoming once again a walled city as it was in ancient times.

Next to the advent of the Boar's Hill 'bus, the building of a theatre by John Masefield in his garden was the greatest event which took place during my early years on Boar's Hill. All sorts of plays were acted there, plays by John Masefield himself, verse-Plays by Yeats and Gordon Bottomley, plays by Laurence Binyon and, of course, Shakespeare's plays—"King Lear," which is so rarely attempted in the theatre, was played there with John Masefield as Lear. The actors would be the casual company of players which Masefield's enthusiasm had got together. The Oxford voice would be heard answering to the Berkshire voice, the scholar to the peasant. One of the latter, who had played some grisly part in "Macbeth" and won all our praise, when asked after the performance what part it was he had played, replied: "I doan't raightly know what the part be called, but I does a deal of killin'."

II

VISITORS AND VISITS

Lest life on Boar's Hill should prove monotonous—it never did—the Monds (Lord and Lady Melchett) were not so far away at Melchet Court, near Romsey. Ever hospitable, Lady Melchett would invite us to enjoy her garden and the society of friends she loved to gather about her. Alfred Sutro was in those days a frequent visitor, and his mastery of piquant and shrewd observation, if it did not set the table in a roar, certainly kept it in a constant chuckle. There would be General Sir Louis Vaughan to shoot with Alfred, and Lady Vaughan to tell us her inimitable Irish stories. Sometimes one of the type of men who most of all I

admire, the explorer type, would be there in the person of Kingdon Ward, back from his journeys in the remote mountains and high uplands of Tibet. He would appear tired and worn, his face lined with the hardships he had undergone. I would listen to the tales that he would tell briefly, impersonally, of the adventures which he had encountered high up on the roof of the world, surveying new lands and discovering new plants; though like so many men who are most worth listening to, he was apt to be silent. But in a day or two the friendliness of Melchet would thaw the frozen lines of his face, its greyness would give place to a rosy tint, and Kingdon Ward would be dancing on the lawns, always with the prettiest girl of the party as his partner. Then in a few days off again Ulysses would go, breaking away from the sirens, allured by the imperative voice of the mysteries which came echoing from Tibet. Bravely his wife Florinda would watch him go and bravely she would wait and watch for his return.

Lady Melchett would say when we arrived, "It's so good for Alfred to have his friends about him; it will distract him from his work." Alfred himself would come beaming to us with outstretched hands, papers forsaken, secretaries packed off. We would play golf or tennis. Alfred's skill was little, but his eye was good, and it gleamed triumph when he chanced by a shrewd stroke to defeat his adversary. He would accompany Lady Melchett when we went round the garden and would suggest all kinds of new developments. Large effects, splendid borders, for Alfred loved magnificence. Those who did not know him, thought him ostentatious, but he was not. It was magnificence which he loved. But after a day or two tranquillity would become tedious to him, back would come the papers, back would come the secretaries, and Alfred was seen no more except at meal-times. Only the incessant ringing of the telephone told us at other times that he was in the house. Sometimes Sir Martin and Lady Conway (Lord and Lady Conway of Allington) would be at Melchet.

There would be bridge. Martin loved it, but Alfred who, they say, could play well, would presently forget what trumps were, thinking of other things. He would get up and say "Come, Lillah, read some poetry to us," and I must go and read Shakespeare's sonnets, which he loved above all other poetry, save Swinburne's.

Now and again Robert Mond (Sir Robert) with May, his Bretonne wife, who has brought him both happiness and health, would be at Melchet: not often, for Alfred and Robert seemed too different in temperament to enjoy long stretches of each other's company. All who know him love Robert. They marvel at his encyclopædic knowledge, bless him for his untiring good works and his lavish generosity for the receipt of which no object is too unworthy. Better milk for better babies, Egyptian exploration, chemical and physical research, nothing ever comes amiss to Robert. Robert's presence would remind Alfred of their youthful days together. He would tell me what a marvellous man their father, Ludwig, was. Old Ludwig Mond never did things like other people, he often did them better. When one of his sons had perchance been extravagant, he would pay the prodigal's bill and, at the same time, would put a corresponding sum to the credit of the other. It seemed to me a version of the parable of the Prodigal Son which all fathers might read with some attention.

At Goodwood time or perhaps earlier in the year, there would be a happy visit to Sir Henry and Lady Norman at Chiddingfold. It was like going home to go there, for the house they live in is a barn, albeit far more magnificent and spacious than ours, and there is a great garden which achieves beauty in spite of, or perhaps because of, its never bothering itself to keep tidy. It runs about everywhere, playing hide-and-seek with the woodlands, with wonderful rhododendrons, here growing almost wild and there lined up in nurseries, waiting for the time when they too will enjoy the wild freedom of the garden. But whether wild or free, they

all have to answer to their names, and they must answer truly, for Lady Norman knows every one of them by name. She even knows the names of the great clumps of bamboos, plants which the learned get in such a muddle about. We would walk with her to the lake, and she would call the wild fowl, softly, and the fowl sheltering in the reeds would answer softly to her call. It sounded as though they were telling one another secrets, they called as though to tell her that they were waiting for her to come and were so pleased that she had called upon them. Whilst we were walking about the garden the air would suddenly become dark with aeroplanes. "They come," Lady Norman would say; "Let us go and see them land." We would hurry to the field, their landing place, and one after another the 'planes would swim through the air in gracious curves till they touched the earth and came to rest. The first to step out would be Rosalind, calm and casual, with a complexion like the most exquisite pink shell. That is how the younger generation travels, even to a house party. I was glad to have a glimpse of the way they live, so much nearer to Heaven than we do. I had arrived by car, and felt that I crawled. They, like angels, came to us descending from the skies. Sir Henry Norman, politician, writer, most versatile of men, would go off for a talk with my Controller, and in the evening would read to us poetry which he loves or else some play of his own which he had just written. The only form of art with which he did not seem to feel completely at ease was the art of the garden. But then Sir Henry is a politician and it is a curious fact that politicians rarely seem to be happy in a garden. They don't quite fit in. They appear as though they were addressing them instead of letting the flowers caress them. When I used to watch Lord Reading walking about the garden at Melchet, I always thought of him as a modern Lord Bacon, one who would, if he wrote about them at all, write about gardens as Bacon did "like a Lord Chan-

cellor." Mr. Asquith could find peace in a garden, but I think he got it more from the paper which he read than from the plants which blossomed there. Mr. Lloyd George loves his garden but he hasn't been looking at it long, before he begins to think of his farm. Sir John Simon, who has taken endless trouble to make the garden of Fritwell Manor beautiful, betrays by his well-groomed appearance as he shows his garden that he is not on gardening terms with the plants that live in it. Lord Birkenhead, in his country house near Banbury, would show with jovial pleasure the garden that he had made, but none of them—no, not one—ever created in my mind the impression that they were a part of their gardens; or if they did, it was that of some garden ornament, beautiful in itself, but none the less extraneous.

Yet there is *one* brilliant exception. Sir Austen Chamberlain, suavely charming always, brings gentleness and sweetness with him when he walks in a garden in perfect harmony with the sweetness and gentleness of the garden itself.

As inhabitants of Boar's Hill, our place in Nature, or at all events, that second nature, the social system, is ill-defined. Oxford's beaux but brooding eyes are apt to be averted from us. We lie a little outside its range of vision. We are too far away to be of the city and too near to be "the county," yet how friendly all the county is to us. Lady FitzGerald would always welcome us to that lovely house of hers near Faringdon. Built, if I remember right, by the brothers West of Bath, it is the most beautiful small country house that I have ever seen, and one of such cunning charm as to compel the countryside to live in harmony with it. There would be festivities at Blenheim, or sometimes when the Palace was thrown open to visitors, the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough would make us share their retreat for lunch in one of the underground rooms, safe or almost safe from the intrepid advances of sight-seers. The Duchess, wittiest and most brilliant of

women, would make us all feel witty and brilliant, and the Duke, reserved, but simple and kind, a great gentleman, would put us all at our ease so that we ceased to care whether we were in truth either brilliant or witty. There would be long talks of the gardens of Blenheim, and the Duke would tell us of the vicissitudes they had undergone. Le Nôtre laid them out; he took his time about it! Sarah, the great Duchess, got tired of him, and one day sent Le Nôtre packing back to France. Capability Brown later on took a hand in continuing the work: the gardens still remained unfinished. The Duke had discovered some of the old plans. "Ought I to finish the gardens in these days?" he asked. "Why not?" I cried, "they will make this place more beautiful." The Duke did complete the gardens, and when I saw them finished I wondered at his skill and admired their beauty. I have known many men who were good hosts, but I have never met one who was so perfect in that testing part as is the Duke of Marlborough.

All the world comes to Oxford, yet despite the enchantments which it offers some who explore it find time to visit our simple abodes on Boar's Hill. Oxford people themselves do it but rarely. It is a full three miles away. The hill is too steep for the bicycle, and the motor car is only just beginning to be known by the University, except, of course, by those pioneers, the undergraduates. Sir William Morris has brought us prosperity, and offers us unending choice of cars, but we are only slowly overcoming our reluctance to this new-fangled mode of progression. Oxford, moreover, is overworked, and none is more conscientious in their work than are Oxford men. Something serene, reserved, inaccessible, monastic is still in residence at Oxford. In term time, work, and after term, recuperation; therefore, we must go to them, and who would not go willingly, for of all the cities which I know Oxford is the most seductive. The streets are crowded, traffic is congested, to cross Carfax at a busy hour is more

hazardous than to cross Cornhill; yet the great heart of it beats tranquilly. And I who have seen generations of them come and go know that something of this serenity passes presently into the turbulent souls of the undergraduates who reside there: that it imparts to them a finer sense of life and of its values than they could get elsewhere. I have been friends with many generations of undergraduates. They used to flock to Boar's Hill to hear poetry read, to dance in our big hall, to admire John Masefield, to visit Gilbert Murray, or in former years to try to get a glimpse of Robert Bridges. They would come to ask me to take part in the performance given by the O.U.D.S. I have never done so, but I have so often wished I had. They are amazing these undergraduates in the first flush of their talents. Their youth inspires them. I have seen "Anthony" acted by Ramage, "Hotspur" by Giles Isham, "King John," by W. G. Devlin, all performances of which any finished actor might well be proud. Then for some years Bernard Fagan lent all his remarkable powers and genius as a producer to the establishment of "Repertory." But life in Oxford is short: term only lasts eight weeks, and though none could have worked more valiantly, repertory under these conditions—and perhaps under any—is a difficult task which only a Barry Jackson (Sir Barry) can accomplish, and that only in a place where life does not ebb and flow so swiftly as it does in Oxford.

It seems to be the fashion just now to disparage Oxford undergraduates. Disparagement is so easy; the customer picks a bad one out of the basket, holds it up in derision: "It is nought, it is nought, saith the buyer, and immediately goeth and vaunteth thereof." I, too, have been in the market and have looked at the wares, and know that the bulk is sound. If it had fallen to my lot to have a son I would have sent him to Oxford.

They tell me that there are other Universities more active in the pursuit in this or that kind of knowledge.

It may be so; but this I know, that the youth who would grow up with a love of life—of work, of play, of learning and of art—gets opportunity to the full at Oxford. He may have artists like Albert Rutherston to teach him drawing and painting, a poet like the late W. P. Ker to fire his mind with the love of poetry. J. A. Smith to expound philosophy and G. S. Gordon, now President of Magdalen, to imbue him with his ardent and discriminating love of literature.

Samuel Butler may rail at Universities, Cobbett may abuse them, Wells may disparage the old ones, but I believe that they preserve and hand on to successive generations of youth a high standard of life, and that the influence which they exert helps to refresh and invigorate the world.

It was only the other day that two of the undergraduates, Rumbold and Scott Snell, came to ask me to help them to revive the English Club. I told them to do it themselves. They went away and did it. I go to their meetings. All the poets and writers are glad to come. I have listened to Lord Dunsany, Humbert Wolfe, Philip Guedalla and Richard Aldington. I have watched the packed audiences, I have heard the speakers give thanks, and I have come away each time glad to have been among young men who are at once so gentle and so virile. Some of the youth are in a great hurry to reform the world, and their exuberance sometimes finds violent expression. When I hear it I smile and say to myself: "Well, well, if youth is not in the van, the Nation will surely be in the cart." Young Oxford used to adore me when I played Mercia. Why should I not in return give them my heart? I do.

When, if old age is vouchsafed to me, I shall sit in the evening of my days, nodding on one side of the ingle-nook, whilst my Controller nods on the other, he may perchance, seeing me smile, look up and say "What makes you smile, Lillah?" and I shall tell him. "My young men have been coming to see me." "What,

all of them?" he will ask. "Yes, all of them. They have forgotten me, but my memory brings them back and keeps them faithful and keeps them young. They were a very nice set who came to-day. There was Victor Cazalet and Peter, his younger brother. Do you remember when Mr. Cazalet, their father, who used to hate to go anywhere, except occasionally to Newmarket to see his horses run, came to see us here, and told me with feeling rarely shown by so reserved a man that I was doing a useful work in entertaining the undergraduates? 'It keeps them in touch with home life,' he said, 'and home life is the best life.' Victor made me meet all sorts of undergraduates: there was Prince Paul of Serbia, who used to talk to me about English writers, and tell me that he read the old ones mostly because their style was better than that of the young ones. But that was before my young men began to write. And Victor Cazalet is now in Parliament, and Peter manages the estate at Fairlawn which his father loved so much. Thelma Cazalet, their sister, is in Parliament also. I should like to go, some day and see Thelma sitting on one side of the House and Megan Lloyd George, who used sometimes to come with Thelma to see us, sitting opposite to her on the other. Beverley Nichols was at Victor Cazalet's party also, and anyone who met him could tell that he would become a famous writer. How he made me smile when I read about Miss W. in 'Down the Garden Path'!

"Do you know that the nicest things that were ever said about me, were said by Oxford men? Humbert Wolfe once told me 'it was through seeing you act in "Nan" that I became a poet.' If that's so, old Leonardo was wrong when he said that those who desire lasting fame should shun those studies in which the work that results dies with the worker. I don't believe any honest work dies. Max Beerbohm said the other nice thing. You remember when I visited him at Rapallo? We were talking of old times, of the times when I played Mercia in Oxford. 'You were Zuleika Dobson,' Max

said. Oh! flatterer, how many Zuleika Dobsons have you known? Yet how sweet it was to hear the author of that immortal book tell me even in jest that I was the model from which he drew his immortal heroine!

"There are more of the young ones coming to see me. There comes young Slocock, whose father, sturdy, upright nurseryman, almost shed tears at the thought of letting him go to Oxford; but he let him come all the same. You made him. And how proud he was when his boy rowed in his College boat, and how proud, too, when he went back and helped him with his business! And there's young Burford, who used to play music when we danced. I suppose he's saving lives now, as his dear old father, Dr. Burford, once saved mine. And there comes young Willoughby!" . . .

"Now, my dear," says my Controller, "you've talked quite enough: drink your cocoa; it's time for you to be in bed!"

CHAPTER XVIII

NEW WORLDS FOR OLD

I

THE years which I spent in acting in London did not give me enough leisure to satisfy my longing for travel in far-off lands. Nor did the new life on which I had embarked, anchored as it was to Boar's Hill, hold out much promise of travel in the near future. However, the sudden change from a life of activity in London to one of peaceful contentment near Oxford fully satisfied for the moment my sense of the dramatic. It would be pleasant, so it seemed to me, to exchange the role of leading lady in the theatre for that of the domesticated wife of an Oxford Professor. Strenuous for peaceful days. It was moreover a new world which bade me welcome to Oxford. Artists I had known in plenty; now it was my privilege to get to know something of the inhabitants of another world, the world of science. The prospect might well have intimidated me; but it did not; for I had already met several distinguished men of science and was prepared for the discovery which I made presently that there is no difference between a true man of science and a painter or a poet. They are, if they are anything at all, all painters and all poets. I had enjoyed the friendship of one of the most forceful of men of science of his time, Sir Ray Lankester, the brilliant brother of Owen and Forbes Lankester, both men of high distinction. Ray Lankester used to remind me of my father, at times the stormiest at other times the sweetest of men. Learned, Ray carried his learning like gossamer—he was a telescope of a man, and could bring the most

distant objects within the range of vision of everybody. I knew already and was to get to know more intimately Professor Armstrong. Whenever I met him he always seemed to me like one of the major prophets having a day off. I was already friends with Sir David Prain, and like all who knew him, loved him, and with Sir John Farmer, and liked him not only for his own sake, but also because, as I know, he had been and was one of the best friends my Professor ever had. I had even danced with a famous man of science, Sir Richard Gregory, who is one of H. G. Wells's oldest friends and is, so they tell me, known to all the learned world as the Editor of *Nature*.

I knew also and hold in deep affection that grand old man of science, Sir Oliver Lodge, who is at home in both worlds, the world of science and the world of art. In fact, he seems to know all about the other world as well. Tall, of commanding presence, with the most beautiful voice, his hearty love of life and the unfailing kindness which he always showed me prevented me from ever fearing to feel constraint in the presence of men of science. But now in Oxford and in London, I met other luminaries of the scientific world and basked in the rays of the clear light which they shed around them. The "dry as dust" professor, like so many other standardised characters, seemed to have no existence except upon the stage and in museums. True to my part of Professor's wife, I became a member of the Royal Institution of London, that home of modern magic in Albemarle Street. I found to my delight that they practised there a new kind of crystal gazing quite as exciting as the old, and more productive. The old kind of crystal gazing claimed to tell whether it would be a dark or a fair man who would fall in love with you, or whether you would be lucky in your investments, but the new scientific kind of crystal gazing, as practised by Sir William Bragg at the Royal Institution, aimed to reveal far bigger things, and succeeded in doing it. It discovered the foundations on which the universe is built. With what reluctance I

went to my first lecture there! Sir William Bragg was the lecturer; but from the first sentence he uttered all my apprehension left me; for there before me I saw no blinking grey-beard, but an upstanding man with quiet melodious voice and kindly smiling eyes, an artist in words and in vision. Sir William spoke simply. He spoke quietly. He spoke clearly, and as he spoke I saw new worlds. He made atoms and that sort of thing as familiar as marbles. I learned about the mighty forces which reside in the meanest of things; forces which get mightier and mightier as the things get smaller and smaller. Another of these scientific wizards whom I heard speak there is Lord Rutherford, and he taught me by his artless way of discoursing on the marvels of the physical universe that the great man of science, no less than the great poet, may be in his simplicity sublime. Younger men, too, among this extraordinary class of mankind have somehow learned this art of being simple and sincere, which I have been struggling on the stage all my life to achieve. J. B. S. Haldane (Jack Haldane as he is known to his friends) stands out with extraordinary vividness in my mind, as one who goes straight ahead to meet discovery, relying more on clear sheer thinking than on all the formidable batteries of apparatus that we see when we are taken round laboratories.

So impressed was I with the wonders of these new worlds which men of science are exploring and annexing that I took one day the printed copy of another lecture which I had heard at the Royal Institution and gave it to Arnold Bennett, begging him to read it. It was the story of how plants are able to grow up and become symmetrical and beautiful, brainless though they be. It told how each plant keeps its balance, puts out its leaves and branches in due order, sends its roots down into the ground and generally how it keeps itself, not only trim and tidy and successful, but also like itself. I never thought about it before. I was delighted to know that they did it without brains. It seemed to

bring a message of hope to all of us who live instinctively. The lecture explained that the plant manages to live its life and direct its destiny by means of ceaseless messages which are sent out from each part to every other part: a kind of correspondence course of education. The messages are missives, actual recipes of right living: the plant's inspired book of holy living and holy dying. Each recipe arrives unerringly like a letter sent by post. It is taken in, and promptly acted on, and so each part of the plant grows harmoniously and it is this harmony which gives the world of plants its supreme beauty. It all seemed to me simple and lovely as an old fairy tale, and so I begged Bennett to read it. We were sailing in the Channel on his yacht. The next day he came up to the top of the companion way where I was sitting, and sat down beside me with a copy of the lecture in his hand. As was usual when he was much moved by emotion, Bennett began to stutter. I sat quiet, for I had long ago discovered that to try to help him out with a word was the surest way to embarrass him all the more. Presently the words gushed out. "That" he said, pointing to the pamphlet, "is the real thing. Why do we writers go on writing about nothing?" Was there ever a more generous soul than Arnold, anyone more glad to appreciate or to give praise? And the praise which Arnold gave was always sweet because it was never insincere. When Arnold Bennett died, I expected all the world to pay tribute to that great and discriminating generosity which he was so quick to give to the young writers of his day. Perhaps the tribute was paid, though it seemed to me that there was less of it than he deserved.

Arnold Bennett and H. G. Wells had, I think, the right idea about science. Wells, of course, has it more clearly, for, as everyone who reads his books must know, he went through a course of scientific training in his youth. Arnold had it too. Perhaps he got it from Wells, to whom he was devoted. Perhaps he got it from the habit of inviting scientific men now and then

to spend a week or two with him on his yacht. A good listener when he wasn't bored—and who listens well when he is—Arnold had a quick eye for realities and essentials. He had also a severe if somewhat prim sense of form which, curiously enough, English prose writers so often seem to lack and lacking affect to despise. I suppose it is because of his possession of this gift that George Moore stands out pre-eminent among the writers of his time. It was Bennett's sense of form, as of that of some living organism, that impelled him to try and portray in "Imperial Palace" the livingness of a great human organisation. What a strange mixture Arnold was, combining a devotion to art with a steady consideration of his pocket, and succeeding in never letting the latter interfere with the former. I do not think he ever wrote a line without putting into it all the effort, all the thought and all the care of which he was capable. It was on the last voyage we had together that I talked to Arnold about "Riceyman Steps" and "Elsie and the Child." I saw in them a fuller expression of his powers than in any other of his books since the early days of the Five Towns. "You have found yourself again," I said, "you will write more of this kind of book." "No," he said, "no more: the public does not like sorrows." Arnold was too young when he died. He had suffered much from ill-health. He had outgrown it, and was getting stronger every year. His powers were growing, and those who knew him best know that they had by no means reached their climax. As it was, he had in him something both of the tenderness and the hardness of the young man. He would sacrifice much of the money by which he set such store to help his relations. True generosity, because he would calculate to a penny what the sacrifice meant to him, and yet make it. He was one of the rare men who allowed his friends *all* the privileges of friendship and how few can do that! He was hard, too, upon occasion. A still warm night at Cowes. The "Marie Marguerite" is moored among the yachts; we

lean over the rail very peaceful, silent. A small rowing boat approaches. As it comes nearer, we recognise one who is an acquaintance of his and a friend of mine. The rowing stops. The rower leans on his oars. "Good evening," he calls. Arnold, impassive, replies "Good-night." The oars droop in the water, the boat glides away. "How could you?" I said. "I couldn't help it," said Arnold; "he's far too interesting a man to invite on board on a peaceful evening like this."

But I find that the men of letters have been running me away from the men of science, just as Shaw's characters run him away from himself. I must return to these more recent objects of my affection. Who, who has ever met him, has not lost his heart to Sir Charles Sherrington? I had heard about Sir Charles before I saw him. Everybody told me that Sir Charles Sherrington was a great man. The late Lord Melchett had sometimes spoken of him. He had told me that when Sherrington became President of the Royal Society, he, Melchett, had urged that no ordinary knighthood was adequate recognition for such a man, or for the holder of such a position; and had recommended successfully that Sherrington should receive the G.B.E. I expected to see an imposing person, but when I met Sir Charles I saw a small man; somewhat dapper, wearing pince-nez and a humorous smile. A casual glance might reveal no more than is shown by Augustus John's portrait. But as I watched and listened to Sir Charles I came to see greatness of mind in every expression of his face. A hard worker, a clear thinker, and one withal who achieves his greatness with a smile and a chuckle. A mind of gold and a heart of gold, both so pure that they contain no trace of vanity, that alloy which gives such hardness to the gold which men carry in their hearts and heads.

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II

THE NEAR EAST

The years slipped by, five of them, the hedges were grown high, the trees were now giving shade in plenty, and who knows if presently the peace which I was enjoying might not have begun to pall. Now and again I could feel the wanderer in me begin to stir, and I would know that University vacations could not give food enough for my greedy appetite for travel. What is the good of the Riviera or Rapallo, a dash to Egypt, a camel ride from Biskra into the desert or a few brisk weeks in Algeria with a blizzard at Timgad by way of diversion? What are things like these to a nomad? Man is born a nomad or a stay-at-home. I suppose we are all descended from an endless line of husbandmen. Some of us, the primitives, claim descent from the pastoralists, people who grazed their sheep over vast spaces seeking ever fresh woods and pastures new. We, their descendants, are the pioneers, the poachers, the nomads. The stay-at-homes come from the ploughman's line. They follow, not their star, but the plough. Each of them in some furrow musing stands, and watches the standing corn. Their ploughlands are their world, and the next village off their map. They must be stay-at-homes, for should they leave their fields the birds would take the corn, or weeds would grow up and choke it. They stand in the centre of a whirling year, to-day harvest, to-morrow ploughing of the stubbles, threshing meanwhile, then the day of seed sowing, harrowing and rolling and hoeing; until with the harvest the farmers' year begins again. When they go away, the ploughmen of the world think only to return, but when the nomads go they want to stay away. Their journey is their destination. By this ye may know them!

My father was a nomad before me. Day by day, week by week, he would go about his business affairs

in Cheltenham; but as the weeks went by he would become more and more restless. Gentleness would give place to impatience and impatience to fits of anger. We children knew the signs, but understood nothing of the urge of which they were the symptoms. Then one day he would say, "Come, Lillah, let's be off," and we would go. So soon as we were among the hills, he would be at peace. We would tramp along fast at first, then slower and slower. He would take my hand and say, "All life is poetry if we would only live it." I used to hope that we might go on for ever. But he who knew every hill and dale would walk in a wide circle and presently I would see some familiar landmark and know that the wonderful journey would soon be over. With this upbringing it seemed only natural to me that I should begin my life as a strolling player and visit almost every part of the Empire before I was out of my teens. But since those days I had been much at home, and restlessness was beginning to grow upon me. It has always been so. I love my home. I am a good housewife. My visitors' book will prove it to the disbelieving. For guests go no second time where the bad housewife rules. Yet at heart I am a wanderer, and therefore my happiness was complete when suddenly I found occasion for travel once again. It came about in this way. My Professor, beside being a gardener, has always taken a great interest in agriculture. During visits to Melchet Court, Sir Alfred Mond, who farmed there, used to discuss with him all kinds of questions on scientific agriculture. They both belonged to the experimental class of man. And so it happened that all sorts of experiments were laid out at Melchet Court, and chief among them experiments to find out how to make the poor Hampshire grass give better feed to the herd of pedigree cows in which Sir Alfred took so much pride. The experiment was astonishingly successful, and we used to be taken frequently to see the luxuriant grass which had been made to grow in place of the poor herbage all around the experimental

plots. Alfred was enthusiastic and urged the professor—my professor—to publish the results; but he only laughed in the way that he has when he has done something interesting and said, “No! it’s too simple; anybody can do it”—as if *anybody* could do anything simple; that’s the very thing that only the very few can do. And so all sorts of experiments were set on foot: on the grass-land, and on the poverty-stricken arable soil of Melchet. Mond and the Professor got more and more interested in scientific agriculture. During this time the firm of Brunner, Mond had begun their now famous work of using the nitrogen of the air for the making of fertilizers. After years of effort, in which Colonel Pollitt took such a prominent part, they had succeeded and could do it just as well as the Germans, who had had such a long start of them. The factory at Billingham was beginning to produce vast quantities of these fertilizers which help to give bigger crops. I visited Billingham some years afterwards, and saw it doing it. There stood a mountainous heap, snowy white and glistening, looking like the peak of the Matterhorn, made out of the nitrogen of the air. One day Lord Melchett—he had become Lord Melchett and a Conservative by then—came to us and said: “I have just done the biggest thing in my life.” He was mysterious about it, but later on he told me that he was referring to the formation of Imperial Chemical Industries. Melchett related to me the story of its origin. If ever there was romance in industry, there it was. He had met another man—Sir Harry McGowan—with vision and foresight and energy no less great than his own. Sir Harry, who was the head of another great concern—Nobel Industries—was interested also in these nitrogen things, for as Alfred told me, the self-same substances which give fertility to the earth, creating life as it were, are also most powerful to destroy it. The fertilizer is also an explosive used alike in warfare and in mining. Melchett and McGowan combined their common and yet diverse interests and the

grand new building which presently rose on the banks of the Thames at Millbank is a symbol of that great and fruitful combination.

Lord Melchett, looking ahead, foresaw the time when British agriculture and the world's agriculture would all be using the synthetic fertilizers made at Billingham. "You must leave Oxford," he said to my Professor, "and come and take charge of the agricultural research which we shall have to do; because with this great new source of power at our disposal, we must find out for ourselves and then teach others how it may best be used for the welfare of this country, of the Empire and of the world." "No!" he replied. "An Oxford Professor is like the Roman Centurion, he will die at his post." But Lord Melchett was very good at getting his own way. There was to be an Agricultural Research Station. My Professor must be the head of it, and he should have ample opportunities for carrying out on a large scale and all over the world experiments like those which he had made on the little plots at Melchet. He would have to travel far and wide to study the conditions and the soils and their needs in different parts of the Empire. The Professorship was given up, and my Professor became a Controller once more. I had listened eagerly to these conversations; and the fact that there would be wide travel in the near future had caused me much delight when I knew that the decision had been taken. Life which had flowed so tranquilly soon swelled into a torrent. There was a farm to be found, research laboratories to be built, and while they were building, there was the whole world to explore. There was that great and once fertile country, Mesopotamia, rich with agricultural promise. On the way to Baghdad lies Egypt, where the hard-working fellaheen already use plenty of fertilizers and might with profit use more, and in between lies Palestine, where the Jews are growing oranges and trying once again to make the desert blossom as the rose. The world, till now, has been a

hungry place. At last it shall become a land of plenty. Prometheus brought down fire from Heaven: science has now brought down fertility from the skies. In any case the first thing to do was to go and see, to find out whether these visions were only mirages or true pictures of a smiling future. The tour was planned. When he heard of it, Lord Melchett would come too. He would visit the Holy Land again, and go with us to Baghdad. The party grew. Lady Melchett, who all her married life had stood by Alfred encouraging and sustaining him, would also come, and so would her daughter, Lady Erleigh, ever eager to add to her knowledge and help others; and presently Oscar Raphael, tranquil, yet adventurous, who had already made archæological explorations in the East, joined the party. We all set off by devious ways to meet at Genoa our starting point.

I was recuperating at Beauvallon, on the Riviera, whither my doctor and dear friend, Dr. Pate, had sent me, after some months of lying up at Boar's Hill with a broken leg. It was on that unfortunate occasion that Thomas Hardy, whom a little before I had been visiting in Dorset, wrote condoling with me:

"We are shocked to hear of your accident, and send our deepest sympathy. Why *did* you go tennising in such a wild way! I am really angry with you, or should be if I did not know what pain you have been suffering—poor thing! I am interested in your choice of poems, but send this off immediately without going into that matter, on which I will write again."

In November Hardy wrote again:

"I feel rather neglected by your not letting me know how you have been getting on about that accident."

And on the 13th November I received my last letter from Hardy. He was so sorry, he said, that "I had suffered so much pain."

The sunshine and society of Beauvallon soon restored

TELEPHONE:-
DORCHESTER 43.

MAX GATE,
DORCHESTER.

3 Oct. 1927

My dear Lady Keble,

We are shocked to hear of
your accident & send our deepest
sympathy. Why did you go tennis-
ing in such a wild way! I am
really angry with you - or should
be if I did not know what pain
you have been suffering - poor thing!

I am interested in your choice
of poems but send this off imme-
diately without going into that matter,
on which I will write again. With
every hope for your recovery I am
Yours very sincerely,
Thomas Hardy.

me. Captain Harwood and his wife, Tennyson Jesse, were at their villa there. Gilbert Frankau was building one. Sir Louis and Lady Vaughan were staying with the Harwoods, and Lord and Lady Reading were at Cannes, where they invited us to stay with them on our way to Genoa. From Cannes we made a pilgrimage to see H. G. Wells at home in his villa near Grasse. The soft air of the Riviera coast is not for him. His house lies high up among the hills, defended from the curious by a mere track, only to be found by the sketch map which "H.G." sends to the friends he asks to come to see him. There we found him still at work, writing among the olives and the vineyards, still wrestling with the problems, still yearning for the progress of mankind, thinking, thinking! Rich beyond all other men in the exuberance of his mental activity. Then on to Genoa and thence to Alexandria, from Alexandria to Cairo, and from Cairo to Palestine—an enchanting land, the enchantment of which no words can ever describe. I stood on the Mount of Olives and breathed the pure air which is like wine. I went down the three thousand feet from Jerusalem to Jericho, and as I walked all outward sounds died away, the air was full of silence and I felt the "Peace that surpasseth all understanding."

I saw the shepherd sit as King David must once have seen him on a little uprising mound, the desert all about him and his sheep straying far in search of the scant herbage. Presently he will get up. He will call his sheep. He will lead them by the still waters of Jordan, and will make them to lie down by its green pastures. I saw the green pastures, but they had decreased sadly since King David's time. Men say: the deserts are the act of God, but some years afterwards, when we returned from these and other wanderings my Controller at once startled and delighted me by saying: "They are not. All the deserts of the world have been created by man. Byron spoke truer than he knew when he said, 'Man marks the earth with ruin' . . ." I saw the narrow strip of green pasture beside the Jordan. I

should never have seen it had it not been for a friendly Arab. He was selling sweetmeats. Some tourists came and chattered with him and spoke unkindly. His eyes flashed with anger. I went up and bought some of his sweetmeats and ate and praised them. His eyes became tender. Might he take us in his boat along the Jordan he asked. We went, and saw a wondrous thing. That desert which is Jericho, parched and arid, has a hidden waterway stealing past avenues of willows and other trees which bend over the stream to watch it as it flows and to screen it from the fierce rays of the sun, until at last the waters of Jordan find their way and are embalmed in the salt of the Dead Sea.

We paused in Palestine, both on our way to Baghdad and on our way back. We went with Felix Weizmann, brother of that remarkable pioneer of Zionism, C. Weizmann, to see the schemes of land reclamation and of tree planting on the hills which are some day going to do so much to fulfil again the promise of the Promised Land. We saw the Jewish colonies, some of which had only been recently established, come out *en masse* to welcome Lord Melchett, and many a lovely sight we saw. It is true that here and there are colonies which are communistic communities, debating societies with agriculture as a side subject, and there the land has to wait until the unceasing daily debate is over. But they were few. The virile, vigorous colonies were many, smiling oases of courage, in a wilderness which without them would spell despair. We saw the stalwart Jews and stocky healthy-skinned young Jewesses, workers to a man and to a woman, tilling the soil with goodwill, and proving by their work that what they once thought was a curse is the sweetest of blessings: "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread." Rough food they gave us, but a tender welcome. We would sit in a stuffy room, Melchett in the place of honour. They would pour out their troubles to him. Melchett would speak to them and bid them be of good courage, and they became of good courage. There was that old Jewish

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colony, a pioneering colony founded by Henri de Rothschild, girt about with groves of eucalyptus; a peaceful and prosperous colony. But what a story of struggle and of courage those eucalyptus groves could tell. The settlers came to that spot perhaps forty years ago. Malaria ravaged them. All or nearly all died. Others came: they too began to die. One of the settlers heard that eucalyptus trees spirit away malaria. None in those days knew why or whether it be so. Sir Ronald Ross had not yet conferred the stupendous benefaction of his discovery on the world. Yet waist deep in water the survivors planted the eucalyptus trees and yet more trees. Desperately they planted them. The trees grew. They drained the water from the swamps. The mosquitoes lost their breeding ground: malaria was vanquished. The faith that can move mountains had removed mosquitoes too. I salute you, oh pioneers of great courage!

We heard much talk in official and other circles of the dissensions between Arab and Jew, but I saw colonies where Jew and Arab were living together in amity. Everywhere and always good and evil are fighting for the possession of the world, but good will win, for it endureth all things. From Palestine to Damascus, with its bazaars scarred with shot fired not so long ago by the French as a warning to good behaviour, and from Damascus across the desert onward to Baghdad. Our ship of the desert was a motor 'bus, into which the party, fourteen strong, was packed with all its paraphernalia. Pilgrims to the eastern City of Romance, what cared they for discomfort? It was early February, the sun shone, the desert was hot and dusty, the road a track now visible, now invisible. So all day long we bumped our way across that interminable stretch of mud which is the Mesopotamian Desert. And thus we came to Reutbah, which marks the boundary between the territory ruled over by France and that occupied in the new mandatory sort of way by Britain. My bones ached when I lay down in the

Rest House at Reutbah, and they ached still more when I got up; hard lying there, with all my clothes on, and the smell of stables in my nostrils. In the early morning twilight we were off again, urged to rising before the sun, by the assurance that we must make Baghdad before dark, lest brigands should fall upon us. The French, whilst we were in their territory, had shadowed us with a Maxim gun mounted on an old Ford car, and now we had only Pax Britannica to shelter us. On and on we went through the mud, dry mud, thank goodness, with ups and downs and mishaps to the 'bus. A brief delay, then on again. Towards evening we saw a dull mirage or two: poor palms rising out of muddy water, till at last a muddy river which they told me was the Euphrates came in sight. We were tired, the 'bus was tired. Only when the relief driver sat on the bonnet and tickled the carburettor could it be cozened into movement. Night fell, and we were still a long way from Baghdad. Whilst I dozed there was a sudden halt. At last I should see the brigands. But no! the voices that were murmuring were much too soft, and the few words I heard were English. The men of the party were called out, and presently came back and, mumbling something about impassable roads, said that we, the women of the party, must get each of us into one of a number of small cars which were waiting for us. It was dark and cold. They hustled me into our car which went bumping off, away from the direction in which we had thought Baghdad was lying. At last the lights of Baghdad came in sight. We crossed the pontoon bridge over the Tigris and came into streets swarming with scowling people. The Melchetts, as we heard later, had found asylum in the house of the High Commissioner, Sir Henry Dobbs. Our car stopped suddenly before a private house, the palace of Sir Elly Kadoorie, and we were hustled past two sentries who were guarding the door. Our host, Sir Elly's nephew, welcomed us on his behalf, but I could see on all that long line of relatives drawn up there to

greet us, looks of constraint which even the charm of eastern hospitality failed to hide. Then the story came out. There had been a rising among the baser sort of Baghdadi. It had been put about that Lord Melchett had come to bring Zionism into the country. The rumour grew. Crowds gathered, and went out to meet our party armed with sticks and stones. The High Commissioner had heard in time and had sent the cars to bring us by that long circuitous route safe to Baghdad. It was a dramatic contrast to witness the triumphal processions in Palestine and to creep by the back gate into Baghdad. Orders were issued that we must keep indoors. There were soldiers on guard on the roof and at the entrance. Over the way we could watch big Arabs sitting with lowering looks fixed on the house. I had never been a prisoner before, and so I got a photographer to take a picture of us all manacled for the occasion between our guards. But I was all agog to see Baghdad, and so after one day in prison I asked Oscar Raphael to take me to the Museum to see the treasures which Mr. and Mrs. Woolley had dug up in their excavations of Ur of Chaldea. No sooner there than Mr. Cook, the Curator, hurried us back again. "Dangerous" he said. A few days afterwards the trouble subsided, and the *Baghdad Times* of February 11th, 1928, was able to read the Baghdadi a little lecture, which ran:

"Young Baghdad had allowed itself to be led by the nose to serve the political ends of a few propagandists who lacked sufficient courage to do their own unpleasant work. For many generations Baghdad had been known as the City of Peace, and yet we find the students of the city in a queer rôle, leaders of a mob of 10,000 ignorant people with but a single thought, to make wanton attack on a small party of tired motorists visiting Iraq with the just expectation that they would be received with the traditional hospitality of the Arabs."

We were free at last to seek, I the romance and my Controller the knowledge, which had lured us across the desert. Each morning as we went our several ways we would pass, shake hands and converse with all the members of the household and their near relatives, lined up in the order of their social status. Their courtesy was exquisite, it both delighted and embarrassed me. I enjoyed running the gauntlet when I went out and when I came back, but when I went to my bath in my dressing-gown I longed for more uncere- monious ways of receiving hospitality. There were all sorts of conferences, but while they were being held I would slip off alone or with one of my friends, Mrs. Kapparn, whose cheerful and smiling endurance of every discomfort won my admiration. We would visit the bazaars. I would buy some of the lovely hand-made silks which were displayed there. They are embroidered in gold and silver of the most exquisite design. How I wish now that I had bought more. These silks grow rarer every day, and the secrets of the embroiderers' art which went to the making of them will soon be lost for ever. Twenty centuries and more jostle against and scowl at one another in the bazaars of Baghdad. The younger centuries, like lean kine, are devouring the older ones and all the lovely art they practised.

It was a great occasion when Mr. Cook, the Curator of the Museum, arranged a visit for us to the Golden Mosque of Karhmain. Holy men escorted us. Without them we might not penetrate into this Mecca of fanatical faith. The buildings of Karhmain look as though made of thin grey or silver wood. They tower high with minute balconies, so high that they seem almost to meet their fellows on the other side of the alley. Old men stalk about the streets with white beards henna dyed a fierce red. One tremendous fellow came swinging towards me carrying a baby on his shoulder. I smiled at the babe and stopped to speak a word to it. The Arab turned haughtily and wrathfully, covered the child with his cloak and spat at me. He must avert

the evil eye. We climbed the roof of a house, in order to see the mosaics on the minarets. A porter opened the door, took off his cloak, shook the dust of it over us, and spat, after which superb insolence he deigned to allow us, Christian vermin, to enter. It seems to me that any wisdom we possess is given to us for use upon occasions such as these. It helps us to take note without resentment of such gestures of contempt, so liberally and whole-heartedly bestowed. I took note of them, and they taught me to understand a little and be grateful for the wonderful patience, tact and sympathy which the British who work in the East show in their dealings with peoples so different from themselves. Those of us who stay at home see them mostly only after their work is done. I used to see them at Cheltenham when I was a girl. I thought that they were nice old gentlemen then, but now that I have seen them at their work, I am full of admiration for the wonderful things they do, and the unruffled way in which they do them.

Babylon! To Babylon by car, to be shown the wonders of the place, graphic language, the old City walls and the vestiges of the hanging garden. We saw the foundations of Nebuchadnezzar's Palace and of the Hall of Belshazzar where the grim feast was held, when the fingers of a man's hand wrote the doom of the king on the walls. Later on, we met, both at Damascus and at home, Mr. and Mrs. Woolley, who had made such wonderful discoveries at Ur. Splendid as those discoveries are, the splendour of their devotion to the task which they had undertaken is yet greater. Whilst I was exploring Baghdad, my Controller was examining the agricultural districts. He got much help not only from the officials, but also from Major Stanley, who was engaged in large agricultural enterprise. Lord Melchett and my Controller met His Majesty, King Feisal, who is a keen agriculturist. Melchett on his return to England gave orders that a present of the fertilizers made at Billingham should be sent to His Majesty. By some

oversight only a bag or two were got ready. Alfred chanced to hear of it, waved his hand commandingly. "Send a train load," he said, "as from one potentate to another." He had a keen sense of humour! After I had returned to England, a letter came from one of the many friends I had made in Baghdad. It set me thinking. It may set others thinking also:

"30 March, 1928.

"Many thanks for your nice letter. Iraq is sorry for having missed the opportunity in retaining you in its midst and showing you its different peculiarities.

"Ample field for study can be found for archæologists, philosophers and serious men, not to speak of the numerous angels and archangels who seem to delight in the close intimacy of the Arabs.

"Can ever England with all its might and all the fame it acquired in civilisation and progress, can it ever expect to produce such prophets of the standing of Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Mohammad, besides others of lesser consequence who all claim Arab descendance, and who have been born in this part of the world? Pan-Arabia?

"Profound thinkers of ours, after many speculations, came to the conclusion that the solution of the world problem will be found in Arabia, and to be more precise, in Baghdad, the City of Peace and the Great Metropolis of the world. Only one of your philosophers, Bernard Shaw, came to the same conclusion; if you read his 'Back to Methuselah' you will be edified on the matter. I appreciate very much your kind invitation to come and see you at your beautiful country house at Oxford, when I come to England. I am very thankful for it. It will be such an agreeable duty to perform!

"Please convey my sincere compliments to Sir Keeble and accept for your Ladyship my respectful homage.

"Sincerely yours,

"E. M. Daniel."

The time came for our return. I took one last look at the Tigris flowing thickly, slowly through the country, as one loath to enter and too tired to leave it. I gave one final shiver as I stood in the cold and the wet and the wind. I slipped one last slip on the greasy glutinous mud, and I found myself in tears at the thought of leaving Baghdad. It had carried me off into captivity, and I wept as those other captives had wept beside the waters of Babylon. My head could speak all sorts of critical things about Baghdad and Iraq, but my heart told it not to be foolish. Truth never comes out of the head: if it ever comes out at all, it comes out of the heart. We stole away from Baghdad as we had stolen into it. This time we took to the air, and for the first time in my life I was in an aeroplane, one of the great Imperial Airways 'planes that fly from Baghdad to Cairo. With what fear and trembling I entered the 'plane! I shut my eyes. Everything seemed quite still. I wondered when we should start. I could bear waiting no longer. I opened my eyes. Everything except the sky had disappeared. I looked down and far below me I could at first see nothing but big dots and little dots. The big dots were the houses, and the little dots were running about. They were people. The desert scene flew past me. It was running away. Then all of a sudden the earth which had been so far off rose up, came close, and swiftly took the aeroplane and me into its most gentle of embraces. We had reached Reutbah. I got out of the car and wanted to dance, but some of my companions looked so miserable that I didn't like to do it. They told me that we had bumped and that we had been three hours doing it. It seemed to me like three minutes. A motor car raced us away from romance to Roman ruins, the rose-pink ruins of Palmyra. The next day we started for Damascus: torrential rains had torn up the track. Great sump holes yawned cavernous by the way. At each hole where the mud was thickest we took the slope at a rush. The car slithered and I learned what real

skids are. Stuck again! Ropes for haulage—out of the mud at last, but no sooner out than one of the other cars was in again. We must have spent hours attending to one another's salvation, but the icy wind was a smart stimulus to effort. As we drew near to Damascus a sandstorm met us, and at last with covered and bowed heads we reached Damascus. There are trees there, fruit trees, and there are green fields. Anyone who arrives as we did from tracking across the desert, would say lo! this is Paradise! And it is therefore not surprising to learn that there are some who locate the Garden of Eden in this place. Damascus now, however, possesses but little to charm anyone who sojourns there, unless he sojourns long enough. We had the great good fortune to be shown some things which the casual visitor might never see. There is a Persian Garden, which the Curator has restored most beautifully. He was a friend of the Melchetts, and asked our party to visit it. There is a wonderful pool of water in the garden. On one pretext or another the Curator kept us walking about the garden till after sunset. The moon rose, and turned the water of the pool into silver. Curtains which had been drawn across between some pillars parted, and we saw afar off, as though in some other world, dancers and singers in the loveliest Persian costumes, appearing upon a stage, playing strange instruments and singing stranger songs. It was as though we were looking across centuries and seeing the remote and yet vivid life as it was once lived in ancient Persia.

We returned home and settled down to work, I to my verse-speaking and my Controller to his task of building up the Agricultural Research Station. A farm was found in Berkshire near Maidenhead, at Jealott's Hill, and within a year or two of this new start in our career the laboratories at Jealott's Hill were built. All sorts of notables were invited to inspect them on the day when they were officially opened, and a beautiful booklet was produced giving plans of the

farm and buildings, even to the names of the fields (Whiskers, Wellers, and other curious names), by which they had been known through endless generations by farmers at Jealott's Hill. I sent a copy of the booklet to Sir Herbert Warren, President of Magdalen, together with a pressing invitation to dine with us on Boar's Hill. Sir Herbert was so devoted to Magdalen and to the University that it was difficult to persuade him to leave them, yet as he was a dear friend of both of us, I was successful in persuading him to come on this occasion. It used often to be said of Sir Herbert that he was too prone to admire distinguished men and persons of rank. He may have been, but he was at the same time a man who devoted himself to duty, and was resolute in the discharge of it. My Controller used to tell with glee how, when he was Professor at Oxford, he asked Sir Herbert to invite Lord Curzon, the Chancellor of the University, to preside at the tercentenary celebrations of the Oxford Botanic Garden—the oldest botanic garden in Europe except that of Padua. Sir Herbert Warren wrote to Lord Curzon. Lord Curzon could not come. He had an engagement: a garden party. "What shall we do?" said Sir Herbert. "Tell him he's got to come," said the Professor, "it's his duty as Chancellor." Sir Herbert wrote and told Lord Curzon of his duty and Lord Curzon, to whom an appeal to duty was never made in vain, obeyed. "That's what Oxford men are like," said my Professor, who was only one of them by adoption.

The dinner to which Sir Herbert and Lady Warren came was made pleasant by the presence of the Masefields and Sir Arthur and Sibyl Colefax. The letter which Sir Herbert wrote and the poem by which it was accompanied will always remind me, even though no reminder is necessary, of that large-hearted, versatile man, who did so much both for the College and the University which he served. The dedication of Sir Herbert's poem has reference to the fact that the Jealott's Hill opening ceremony was presided over

by the Rt. Hon. J. H. Thomas, who at that time held the office of Privy Seal.

“June 30th, 1929.

“What a pleasant party you gave us! I was greatly pleased to see both the Colefaxes and the Masfelds again. The second I had not seen for a good while and the first for ever so long.

“It is delightful to see Sir Frederick in this position and with that job. And I am glad he was at Magdalen in my time.

“Yours very sincerely,
“Herbert Warren.”

“The poetic air of Boar’s Hill has inspired the enclosed. I hope Sir Frederick [my Controller] won’t think it too frivolous or making too free. It shows I’ve read his booklet.”

An Earnest Appeal to the Lord Privy Seal.

Right Honourable Thomas,
I hope you’ll keep your promise,
To end my unemployment
And to find me true enjoyment!
As an agricultural zealot,
A blithe and willing helot,
On the pleasant Hill of Jealott,
In research or in experiment,
I should find both pay and merriment,
In testing fertilizers
Under scientist advisers;
I should listen to their parable
Of grass-land and of arable;
Under clever kind Sir Frederick
I should fear no neck or head rick,
I should learn how best to battle
With sheep and pigs and cattle
At “Whiskers” or at “Wellers,”
I should meet some friendly “fellers,”

And when I wanted holiday
I could have a very jolly day,
Going motoring daily up town,
With some baby beef from Nuptown,
And looking in at Ascot,
With a haytime moon for mascot;
Then at last to the Dominions,
On an aeroplane's swift pinions,
I'd fly East, South or West,
And like David's dove find rest,
In some distant quiet nest.

III

SOUTH AFRICA

After a year or two at home, during which time I gave more and more of my leisure to verse-speaking, opportunity came again in 1930 for long distance travel in South Africa and Rhodesia. It was once again a large party which set out for the Cape. There were Lord and Lady Melchett, Sir Frank and Lady Spickernell and ourselves. It was early January and the sea was stormy. I know not why it is, but most people are proudest of those of their possessions for which they deserve the least credit. I am a good sailor, a perfect sailor. I have no reason to be proud of it, but I am. I alone of the party enjoyed the rough seas which we encountered all the way to Madeira, the others either endured them or suffered from them. They were not proud of their susceptibility. Why should I be proud of my immunity? Yet my pride brings me into good company. Lord Oxford, than whom no less boastful man ever breathed, used to tell with undisguised satisfaction of a victory he once gained over an Admiral of the Fleet. Mr. Asquith, as he was then, was summoned to attend upon King Edward, who was, I think, in Spain. Asquith set out on the Admiral's flagship. Night after night, as the ship

ploughed its way down an angry channel, there were fewer and fewer officers at dinner. The storm grew worse. The diners grew fewer, until at last Asquith and the Admiral were left to dine alone. They used to eye one another covertly for sign of discomfort. There came a night when Asquith dined alone. "I beat him," Mr. Asquith said.

Hot suns, swimming in the open air pool, riding the gymnasium horse, deck quoits and dancing made the days slip by all too quickly till we reached Cape Town. There we were the guests of Sir Abe Bailey, in his beautiful house at Muizenburg, a little way out from Cape Town, close by the sea. I listened to the enthusiastic talks between Lord Melchett and Sir Abe. Melchett, ever eager to get things done, began so soon as he landed to preach Empire Free Trade. Sir Abe as well as others listened at first, as it appeared to me, a little dubiously, but when Melchett made it clear that the Empire Free Trade he contemplated required, for success, prosperity in all parts of the Empire, Sir Abe Bailey became a willing convert. Sir Abe keeps open house. There would be twenty or thirty people every night at dinner; but enjoy myself as I did, I was eager to be off. Yet every day that I was there I would go to what I think must be the most lovely garden in the world, the botanic garden at Kirstenbosch. We paid a visit to Sir Lionel and Lady Phillips at their home at Somerset West, a wonderful house dating from the Dutch days, beautiful pictures, fine music, but most beautiful of all, the garden. There were grand old camphor trees, pergolas of vines with great bunches of ripe grapes, black and red and white, pomegranates, figs, mangoes, and all kinds of bright flowers. Flowers in South Africa, even English flowers, grow bigger and have brighter hues than under our grey skies. In Kirstenbosch all the numberless flowers of the Cape Peninsula are assembled. It is one gigantic rock garden, with the sheer cliffs of Table Mountain for a background, and the rocky outcrops of the mountain

spread out like sheltering wings. Trees and shrubs and lesser plants accompanied by little rivulets run all the way down the mountain into the valley below. Whenever I went to the garden I would seek out Mr. Matthews, who has charge of it. He is one of the old Kew men—you find them all over the world, and wherever you find them the gardens which they grow always flourish. I suppose that Sir Arthur Hill, the Director of Kew, and the gardeners under him, having succeeded so well in making plants grow there, can make them grow anywhere. Chief among the beautiful plants that grow at Kirstenbosch are the silver trees, the leaves of which are of a beautiful silvery white; they glisten in the sun and dart about like white butterflies in the breeze. Cape Heaths of every imaginable colour and flowering one or other of them all the year round. There are, too, the Brunias, which bear white flowers in rounded heads on the tops of the branches. I must have something to remind me of the delightful hours I spent in the garden. I sought out Gwelo Goodman, whose paintings of flowers I had already admired at Government House, and begged him to paint some flowers for me. I showed him the Brunias, and he painted them and did as well another smaller gem, a Cotyledon, all silvery grey with its flower branches like candelabras bearing coral-pink bell-shaped flowers. There were visits to Government House where their Excellencies the Earl of Athlone and Princess Alice made us welcome. Wherever we went we heard their praises. They had made friends with and were loved by everybody. We visited General Hertzog in the beautiful home which Cecil Rhodes had built at Groote Schuur, and the General insisted on us going to see him again when we returned, in order to tell him what our visits to the different parts of South Africa would have taught us. I sat next to General Smuts at lunch, and not a word did he speak to me until I chanced to turn to him and say something about poetry. "Ah, that," he said, "that's what matters. I am always happy if I have

a book of verse with me." And then he talked to me about the plants which he knows and loves, and of the great future which lies before South Africa. General Hertzog and General Smuts, though people say they have little in common, have in truth much. They have the love of South Africa in common. We left the others of the party at Cape Town and went to Bloemfontein. There I was the guest of the Dramatic Society and women members of the Town Council. I thought that I should have to preach the gospel of poetry to them, but I soon found that there was no need. People who live in remote places, if they keep their minds open at all, find poetry their dearest friend.

From Bloemfontein to Pretoria, where Pole Evans, one of the explorers among men, and one who knows every plant in South Africa from the Equator to the Cape, took me to see that glorious pile standing majestic on a no less glorious site, the Parliament House and Government buildings: a superb memorial to the courage and vision of General Botha and General Smuts and to the genius of the architect, Sir Herbert Baker. They, with a depleted Treasury, allocated three million pounds for the building, and Herbert Baker proved worthy of their trust by designing one of the most beautiful modern buildings in the world. Johannesburg not so long ago a mining camp is now a garden city. Sir George and Lady Albu carried on the unbroken custom of hospitality which South Africa shows to visitors. The Repertory Players, the University Players and the Dramatic Societies of the city made me go to speak to them about poetry and drama. I went, and after I had spoken to them I said that they must show me something of their own work. They did. They played scenes from "The Merchant of Venice," all the players in modern dress which, strangely enough, seemed to make the play more real. They also played Barrie's one-act play "Shall we Join the Ladies?" and in order to show my thanks I did scenes from Masfield's "Nan." When the acting was over, they made me a

guest of honour at a supper party and crowned all their kindness by presenting me with an illuminated address of welcome. What wonderful progress I found in South Africa since the days when I first went there after the Boer War! The only thing that had not changed was the kindness of the people.

From Johannesburg down to the green and wooded, warmer country of Natal, and then away back to Johannesburg, across the Kalahari Desert to Rhodesia. We reached Salisbury on St. Patrick's Day. The town was *en fête*. We walked in procession to Mother Patrick's grave, bands playing and choirs singing. In the evening there was a banquet given by the Mashonaland Irish Association, a society as old as the settlement of the country. There were speeches. I was called upon to speak. Fortunately for me, I had Shaw and Yeats, George Moore, Lennox Robinson and Shaun O'Casey to fall back upon. I spent a day on the Matoppos, where Cecil Rhodes lies buried with the vast spaces which he loved all around him. We visited Bulawayo and would have stayed much longer but our time was up, and so back across the desert, and over the mountains down to Cape Town and then home again.

Every day that we had spent in South Africa had been a stimulus to us. Every one of us had learned much from our visit. We had always been told that the one thing lacking in South Africa is a sufficient rainfall, and that the deserts and barren parts of it are desert and barren because of the lack of water. But my Controller astonished us all by saying: "It is not so. These poor brown pastures which support so painfully such a small number of cattle are starving. They need nitrogen, they need other things as well. Give them these things, and all these grasslands will easily support many times the number of cattle which now graze them." He gave an account of his observations at the meeting of the British Association at Bristol. Mr. Bernard Shaw came to hear the lecture. When it was known that

Shaw was coming, everybody flocked into the Hall. After the lecture was over, they insisted on hearing Shaw. G.B.S. stood up and said: "I know nothing about South Africa, except that the box-office receipts there are often very unsatisfactory." But he had listened to the lecture, and a year or so afterwards went to South Africa to see it for himself. Shaw had always believed in water, and now he had learnt something about nitrogen as well. The last time I heard him proclaim his faith in water was at the lunch table. Lopokova, who was sitting by him, asked Shaw: "How do you keep your lovely complexion?" He replied: "Cold water, nothing else; I always wash in cold water!" That luncheon party was memorable to me also from the fact that I met there a man whom G.B.S. introduced to me as "Mr. Shaw, a writer, a very fine writer." I talked to "Mr. Shaw" about verse-speaking. "I don't think verse should be spoken at all," he said. Had I known who "Mr. Shaw" was—that he was Lawrence of Arabia—I doubt if I should have dared to say a word; but as it was, I raised my eyebrows and asked: "Do you think that music also should only be read?" I am glad to know at all events that my Shaw—G.B.S.—enjoys verse-speaking, and sometimes even confesses it.

In December 1931 he was staying with me, and I asked him to put his name in my copy of his *Collected Works*. Instead of doing that, he wrote this letter on the blank page of the bound volume containing the first sketch of my life on the stage, edited by Lady Vaughan and published in the *Strand Magazine*:

"12th December, 1931.

"My dear Lillah,

"I set aside an hour this morning to write something in all the books; but I incautiously looked into this one and immediately began reading it for old times' sake until my hour was gone; so I shall just write something in 'Man and Superman,' and leave

it at that until I return from South Africa, whither I sail with Charlotte on Christmas Eve.

"Some day after my return I shall complete the job in its proper home with you.

"I notice, by the way, that you say nothing herein of your great third period as an inspired organ of dramatic poetry. Others as well as you have acted with great glory; but this is something that none of the rest have done; and it is perhaps the best of all.

"As ever and always your

G. Bernard Shaw.

This tribute serves as a happy reminder of the verse recital which I had given not so long before at the Grotian Hall in London, and of the generous expression of appreciation which Sir William Rothenstein sent me after the performance.

"The very spirit of Keats, of Blake and Shakespeare filled the Hall, penetrated my being, and I heard each single word. The first and last rule for speaking poetry—clear enunciation—the second and third rules—let the poets speak for themselves. These at least seem to be the rules you have made for yourself. . . . I smelt peaches and ripe apples when you spoke Keats, and the Blake was a trumpet call to us."

How sweetly the kind words of friends fall upon the ear. And "Will," too, adds kind deeds to his kind words. I sit to him for my portrait, and admire the deft swiftness with which he draws me. And admire again the artist in the man when, suddenly looking up, he says: "I must do another drawing. I can see more now than when I first began." I am glad to think that I, too, can see more now than when I first began.

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CHAPER XIX

THE LOVELIEST THING ON EARTH

I WONDER whether writers, men used to putting their thoughts on paper, ever feel as I am feeling now that the things they most want to say are the hardest to write about. I suppose they do not. "Out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh" is no doubt true enough of orators and writers. But I am neither. My art has been that of saying things that others have told me and learning to say them better than the writers thought they could be said. They have told me how I should say them. I have listened, and then said them in my own way.

But now that I have to try to say things that I wish with all my soul to say, I can only sit and think and hope for words to come. I want to write of the loveliest thing on earth—Greek Drama. I want so much to write about it in a way that will make people who are sure they can't be bothered with it say, "By Jove, this sounds interesting!" I want to do this because Greek Drama is to me like a world with not one but two heavens. It gives a double chance of salvation. It is the happiest marriage which artists—and artists are not always celebrated for their happy marriages—have ever made, the marriage of poetry and drama.

What is drama? The kindling of emotions. It overcomes the inertia of custom and sets life moving again. It breaks the monotony of existence. It brings new hope to a disappointed world. It recreates the world.

Drama does these things by going straight to the point. To get joy and hope and compassion out of drama no man nor woman need be clever. Greek

drama is not a wine which goes to the head; it goes to the heart, and all the head need do is to say, "well done, heart!"

Greek drama is not for college shelves and college lectures. The vestals who tend its fires must not be college dons: that is bad casting. The learned have done the world great service in keeping its fires from dying out, but only the stage can fan Greek drama into flame again, and make it shine like a beacon lit long ago to guide all future generations of wayfaring men and women.

The other heaven which Greek drama unfolds is the heaven of poetry: of harmonious motion: not restless like a scurrying world busy in going nowhere: not the fussy movements of Martha but the soft heart-beat of Mary.

In writing like this, must I feel these pages hurriedly turned? Must I hear the very man or woman I want to read them exclaim: "skipping is the right motion for me." If so, all I have been longing to do in this book turns to failure, and I must be content with that most barren of labours: preaching to the converted. I don't want to preach at all. I want simply to open my heart and to touch the hearts of others.

Here is a Greek play. It has lived some 2,000 years, rather less than the length of life of the oldest trees in the world, the big trees of California. Mankind takes, and rightly takes, such pains to keep them alive. This Greek play has kept itself alive for more than 20 centuries. It is as immortal as mortal things can be. Civilisations have come and gone and the play still lives. Its leaves are as fresh to-day as when the old Greeks dared to plant it on the Athenian stage. Every man who has ever seen the play acted—everyone throughout these centuries, whose heart was not of stone—has been moved by it: by sharing the adventures, the sorrows and the hope of which it tells.

When I first got to London, a mere girl, I felt half-starved. There was nothing there like what I had been

fed upon in Cheltenham: there were no hills which my father and I could climb and from the top speak forth the poetry of Milton and of Blake. They took me to see pre-Raphaelite pictures. I tried to like them. Then one day I lunched with Graham Robertson. He had Rossetti pictures on the walls. I thought them nice: but after lunch we went into another room the walls of which were hung with Blake's pale and stupendous imaginings. I put my hands before my eyes. "Not well?" they asked. "I am well," I answered, "but so ashamed. I thought I liked those pictures downstairs, and now I see what I have been looking for ever since I came to London." "Strange girl" they thought. Yes; but I did not care, for I had once again caught a glimpse of the mysteries of life which Blake spent all his life in seeking and trying to show; of those spiritual things which as I see them are life itself trying to get born.

I knew something about Greek drama even in those early days, and all the time I was learning how to act and making my way in the stage I used to say to myself "some day I will put Greek plays on the London stage."

Then in 1908 my chance came. I was playing in "What Every Woman Knows" at the Duke of York's Theatre. My part was a negative sort of part and left me time for other things.

I asked Gilbert Murray, the greatest of authorities on the Greek drama, to help me. I would do "The Bacchae" in his translation, and would play the part of the god Dionysus. I got William Poel to interest himself in the production. With this encouragement I took the Court Theatre and arranged for a series of matinées.

Gilbert Murray aided me unceasingly. We corresponded about the play and its meaning. He wrote on October 10th, 1908:

"One thing I meant to say to you about the play as a whole. Try to imagine what the story of some persecuted Christian saint or missionary would be,

if it were continued into the next world and we saw the persecutors in a mediæval hall being torn by devils with red hot pincers while the saint, with a seraphic smile, stood by saying, 'I told you so.' Think even of the Crucifixion story as treated with Pontius Pilate in hell suffering ghastly tortures while Jesus stood by making comments. That gives one almost exactly the point of the *Bacchæ*. It is exactly the criticism that Euripides would have made on an ordinary mediæval mystery play. 'You say that blasphemous people suffer in hell? Very well, I represent them doing so: now see if you admire your God who has made a hell. Pentheus is a tyrant and a persecutor, Dionysus a holy and sanctified being; but when this holy being has his will, his full revenge, he seems infinitely worse than his persecutor.'

This helped and the help was sorely needed, for neither Mr. Poel nor I had ever seen a Greek play produced. The production was made simple and symbolic and had to be inexpensive: stage draped in purple with steps in front, chorus of inspired damsels, four women, and four others for the Choric dances. It was a bold experiment for, as Gilbert Murray's letter shows, the play, unlike other Greek plays, is non-human, superhuman, in its appeal.

There is something Shaw-like in Euripides, or rather something Euripidean in Shaw. They both delight in putting the gods, the degraded traditions and customs of a people, in purgatory.

So I was the god Dionysus—strong and calm and magnetic. I copied costume and make-up from the sculptures in the British Museum. The dramatic critic of the *Times*, well-known for his love of art and power of graphic expression, applauded the production: "It can be imagined how compelling a figure Miss Lillah McCarthy looks with the ivy and grapes in her hair, and the flame-coloured tunic under her tiger-skin, a strange Eastern god full of grace and beauty, and of a subtle perfume-like charm."

I should like to produce the play again now that I am older and can better understand the subtleties of the part, the poetry, the beauty and the power of fascination of Dionysus. All through the production Gilbert Murray lent me his aid. I must sustain the note of steadiness and danger. "Keep the God behind the child," convey the double meaning of this divine Being who takes on "the form of the things that die, and walks as a man."

Mr. Poel got very nervous over the production, for it was a new adventure for him. To produce the effect of time standing still is essential, ominous, since in that time is wrought the destruction of Pentheus whom Dionysus compels to speak the thoughts that he puts into him.

My first attempt to put Greek drama on the stage was well received. A well-known critic summed up his impressions thus: "The play is nevertheless among those that send one away moved and exalted. Its poetry, its high grandeur, its air of dealing through symbols with ultimate things, the whole mood of it, preserved in a perfect translation and not missed by the players, stir the spirit as it is seldom stirred in our theatre."

Four years passed before another opportunity came. In January 1912, Sir John Martin Harvey asked me to play "Jocasta" with him in "Ædipus Rex," at the Covent Garden Theatre. Max Reinhardt was to produce the play and Gilbert Murray's translation was to be used. Needless to say, Reinhardt's fame as a producer gave an added eagerness to my acceptance. The cast was: Ædipus, Martin Harvey; Creon, Louis Calvert; Jocasta, Lillah. We rehearsed the scene in the foyer of Covent Garden whilst the stage and auditorium were used for rehearsing the crowd and chorus. Jocasta inspires an actress, strong, dignified, no suppliant, great in authority, great in poise, but greatest in kindness and humanity, "to live as life may run, no fear no fret were wisest near the sun." Mother-love is the heart of Jocasta's character, and the poignancy of the tragedy the stroke of fate that makes her the wife of her own son, a fate which, when she comes to know

it, so overwhelms her with horror, that Jocasta babbles inarticulately as she stands, a terrible picture of distraught grief carrying her over the border of sanity.

I used to watch Reinhardt "producing" the crowd. He would sit in the stalls, eyes apparently closed, slack, and let the stage manager work on the grouping of the chorus and crowds. Let well alone. But the moment it ceased to be well, another Reinhardt was seen, hands uplifted, stopping in an instant all traffic of the crowd. He knew no word of English, but yet managed to convey and secure the effect he wanted.

Gilbert Murray, who came to the first dress rehearsal, expressed both approval and criticism in a letter to me:

"January 12.

"I expect you have heard the sort of thing I had to say about Jocasta. First of all, I never saw you so good. Indeed I did not know that there was any actress in England capable of looking and speaking the part with that heroic strength and dignity. But I do run up against Reinhardt here and there. You will consider whether any modification is possible, without spoiling his effect. He is, I think, haunted by the nervous, frivolous, jumpy Jocasta of old German critics. Hofmannsthal took her that way. My Jocasta is a stronger, calmer woman, schooled by experience and suffering.

"In detail; at first entrance I want more calm and authority. You cannot make others calm except by being calm yourself. You must bring an atmosphere of calm authority. 'I don't like "the seer."' Pah!

"I should like you to be stronger than *Œdipus*, as a mother is stronger than a child, and keeps a brave face to him. But this perhaps goes right against Reinhardt and cannot be considered.

"I don't like your way of taking the *Corinthian's* line 'Then all thy fear has been for nothing.' Perhaps in general too many movements, detracting from the value of the big movement.

"Your two longish speeches—"The Seer" and the prayer to Apollo—are magnificent. I got the feeling of stately beauty there, the essential quality of a Greek tragedy, more than anywhere else in the play. It was a joy to me. Something similar in the Messenger's entrance after all the tumult and row.

"This letter seems all fault-finding, when I meant it to be quite the opposite. The whole thing is magnificent.

"Yours,

"G. Murray."

Greek drama was, of course, written for production in the open air. Reinhardt's genius enabled him to get the effect of broad spaces, an atmosphere as though charged with electricity, the ominous stillness before storm, the tension which precedes tragedy. The feeling seemed, by some magic of production, to run like a prairie fire from chorus through crowds and principals, encompassing them all. There has been no greater triumph of production on the English stage before or since. The illusion of effortless ease which the truly great unconsciously cast over their work was complete with this remarkable man. He made actors and audience, stage and auditorium one: the actors came on the stage from the front of the theatre, and the stage itself was built out into the auditorium. The audience were not spectators but participators in the tragedy, a conception which is incompatible with the casual arrival of the late comer, as at least one of them—Henry James—discovered. Henry James saunters in, self-possessed and nonchalant. The crowd rushes to meet him. He beams on them. But stout as he was, he was borne off his feet and hurled upon the stage, a very startled Henry James.

"*Ædipus Rex*" is a long play which no one finds too long: 6.30—11.30.

Charles Ricketts must of course design my costume and head-dress. His fastidious sense was for once caught

napping. He sent me sketches of costumes worn by German actresses who had played the part. No, no. I sent them back telling him I could neither bear nor wear them. Then he became the true Ricketts, the great creative artist, first among all theatrical designers. Lovely things came, Greek robes, barbaric tiara, long ear-rings, chains of heavy beads, plaited hair, exquisite head-dress. He added to the triumph of the play: a triumph indicated by the description published in a great London newspaper:

“Darkness and through the gloom a palace towering dim and black. Moans and cries and shouts set the air throbbing, and crowd upon crowd of people surges in, and there the light breaks upon them, and they fall down suppliant, and stretch out their hands, a whole nation of them, to one man—white-robed, bronze-breastplated—standing high above them, calm and stately, god-like. A man and a woman, in all the glitter of royalty, side by side, looking down upon the common folk—proud, sure captains of their souls, strong in each other’s love, while already they are toiling fast to the discovery that their love is the most hideous travesty of all that human love can mean. And together still they go in by the dully glittering doors, to the home where they are one, while she caresses him and clings with a tenderness that makes her tragedy infinitely pitiful, infinitely terrible. Then a beautiful picture of that woman, wife and mother to the same man, coming to pray the gods who have doomed her to torture, a noble form in orange chiffon, with white arms bearing aloft a golden urn. Her huddled, cowering body, the arms that hide her face when at last she knows the truth. Her drawing near, for a last farewell to the son and husband who still did not know, her movement to kiss him, and the agony of her shuddering back from his touch. When the worst was known, and all was done, the god-like king, the world-honoured man staggering self-blinded,

half-mad, from the palace of his shame, his piteous abasement, his long, slow passing as he groped and stumbled away, away and out of sight. Then darkness, and through the gloom a palace towering dim and black."

Shaw served me up hot punch:

"23rd January, 1912.

"Read the enclosed play 'His Majesty's Embassy' by Maurice Baring. It is so exquisitely on the nail just now as a picture of the Foreign Office that it is positively a public duty to do it. Lady Lytton wants to do a play to build a church in the new suburb that has grown up round Knebworth Station. A performance by real society people [if only they could be heard] with you and Martin Harvey as the actor and actress in the play in the last act, would crowd the Kingsway with smart society, and would help to make a splendid vogue for Baring, whom we really must nurse as a playwright.

"Will you come to lunch on Friday and help me to entertain Winston Churchill, who will not find *my* beaux yeux much of a treat.

"We saw *Œdipus*. I could do a better production from the point of view of showing up Apollo; but the thing was worth while, though there were shortcomings which I won't set down in black and white. You were very fine, but your reluctance to kiss Edipoctavius Robinson should have been part of a solemn exit, the business of the train whistling three times before it went into the tunnel was no good; if a woman starts screaming, and the *Jocasta* situation is quite beyond screaming, she keeps on at it indoors as well as out. Also you were very naughty over the minor beats in the verse: the cesura in the middle of the line [the half-hour] was all right, but the quarter and three-quarters were slurred. Once you said 'I near' for 'eye and ear,' which shows how thoroughly Irish you are. However, these are only specks: the

effect in the main most imposing. I noted the Etruscan arrangement of the hair; but if you had looked at the Etruscan tombs in the British Museum first [frightful guys] you would not have sacrificed so much of your brow's beauty.

"G.B.S."

Reinhardt was enthusiastic. A friend wrote to tell me what he said, and I shall ever be grateful to Reinhardt for his praise and to my friend for sending me the sweet morsel.

"Must just tell you how enthusiastic Reinhardt was about you to-day. I wish I could give you the impression he gave of real enthusiasm for your performance. Said it was the finest piece of tragic acting he had ever come across. It nearly ended by my clasping him to my elderly breast and pressing a chaste kiss on his Jewish nose.

"Yours"

Gilbert Murray gave encouragement and guidance:

"January 19, 1912.

"I got up yesterday evening in time to see 'Edipus' again. It gets better and better. *You* seemed to me better than on Tuesday, and so did Harvey. I enclose an inarticulate letter from Agnes, written in the train, which may please you.

"I have one note only. 'Come, I will tell an old tale' should be said after a mental struggle and with effort. You are going to tell him something you have sedulously hidden from every human being till now, and can hardly bear to tell now.

"Excuse pencil. My fountain pen won't write except in my waistcoat pocket.

"It is a magnificent performance.

"Yours very sincerely,
"G.M."

Frederic Harrison, philosopher and dear friend, who loved the drama and was always kind to me, sent me a line:

"24th January, 1912.

"I am up in town for a day or two to marry my nephew, yesterday saw 'The Miracle' and of course 'Œdipus.' I am coming this afternoon at 3 p.m. and took a seat in grand circle as being better to view entire effect than in stalls. I know the play of old and have my Murray with me. I hope to survive.

"May I come round and see you *after* the close of tragedy and hope if you will see me that you will still be wearing the wonderful prehistoric costume.

"Yours very truly,

"Frederic Harrison."

Actresses and actors learn much philosophy in their calling but rarely meet philosophers and so we received him in full costume, and I found something very lovely in the enthusiasm of a man so very old.

When "Œdipus Rex" came to an end, I went back to the Kingsway to take up my part of Margaret Knox in "Fanny's First Play." From tragedy to comedy: from Opera House to the Kingsway. I took Jocasta with me. To fill the vast auditorium of the Opera House, and to play the tragic part of Jocasta, I had used deep, vibrating notes. When I went on the Kingsway stage, habit was too strong for art. My voice boomed out when it should have babbled, and the audience found the unrehearsed effect so comic that they broke into applause; but it was no good, I myself had burst out laughing and after that could only babble my next lines. Again the unrehearsed contrast delighted the audience, again they laughed and applauded. By this time, with comedy holding my hand, I was ready enough to take what the gods, or for that matter the stalls, gave me. I had learned to pick up experience wherever it was to be found, and so for the rest of the play I let

my voice see-saw between the deep-throated notes of Jocasta and the silvery tones of babbling comedy.

In 1912 I had the fortune to see "Œdipus" at the Comédie Française with Mounet-Sully as Œdipus. From the production, however, there was nothing to learn. It was cold, classical. Chorus: two women dressed in French classical style. No movement, the figures of the actors motionless, carved in marble. Nothing lived in it except Mounet-Sully, for whose superb acting no praise would be extravagant, but oh! for a Reinhardt to breathe into the other actors breath of life.

The next Greek play in which I played was the "Iphigenia in Tauris" of Euripides. It was put on at the Kingsway in March, 1912, for a series of matinées. Godfrey Tearle was Orestes, Mr. Bridges-Adams, Phylades, and I was Iphigenia. The setting and costumes—most beautiful—were designed by Norman Wilkinson. Beerbohm Tree, always generous, wrote:

"April 15th, 1912.

"I hope to have the pleasure of inviting you to do 'Iphigenia in Tauris' during the Festival.

"It would be a most interesting item, and it would be a rare pleasure for me to have you in the theatre.

"Yours sincerely,

"Herbert Tree."

We did play "Iphigenia" at His Majesty's Theatre, the larger theatre gave an added beauty to the play, and for the first time in my recollection a Greek play in London created a great sensation. Tree wrote:

"I must write and thank you for your beautiful performance and say how happy I was to have you here. I don't know what the Press will say, but I was more than satisfied with the way everything went.

"Yours very sincerely,

"Herbert Beerbohm Tree."

John Masefield wrote me a letter which, like all he writes, gave special pleasure because of the exquisiteness of the appreciation and perfumed praise:

"20 March, 1912.

"I would not like the day to pass without telling you how very much I was touched and pleased by your *Iphigenia*. It was the most consistently fine thing you have done, and good in many ways, little tender and feeling ways, where I have not seen you much hitherto, and then in the big ironic scenes you went on and triumphed, and got it all right and fine. Mr. Tearle backed you nobly, I thought, and Thomas was fine, and the last messenger really excellent, but you were the real thing. Con thinks so, too, and so did Nevinson.

"Yours ever,
"John."

Charles Ricketts, like a dearly-loved big brother, sent advice as well as congratulations.

"I did not join your friends in congratulating you on your *really notable* performance in '*Iphigenia*' because I felt I could write about it better, and be able to say how you have definitely added to your scope and qualifications of the classical, tragic actress. I should like to see you as *Antigone* and as *Alcestis*! I thought your impersonation dignified and beautiful. You have an admirable gesture when you place a finger over each eye—which I thought most beautiful. Once or twice I should have liked a little more pathos over past suffering. Duse often produces astonishing effects by merely closing her eyes whilst she speaks of tragic long past things. I think the lights on you too harsh—but this is a detail. Both Shannon and I were absorbed by the production, though it is far from being one of our favourite Greek plays. You looked magnificent, your dress is the *only one* I have

ever seen on the stage which really looked Greek. Tell Wilkinson that I liked all his dresses, but that your dress filled me with bitterness and envy. You really looked like a Greek statue, and we look forward to seeing the performance many times.

"Shannon joins me in congratulations.

"Sincerely yours,

"C. Ricketts."

"P.S.—I have heard nothing but praises of you on every hand."

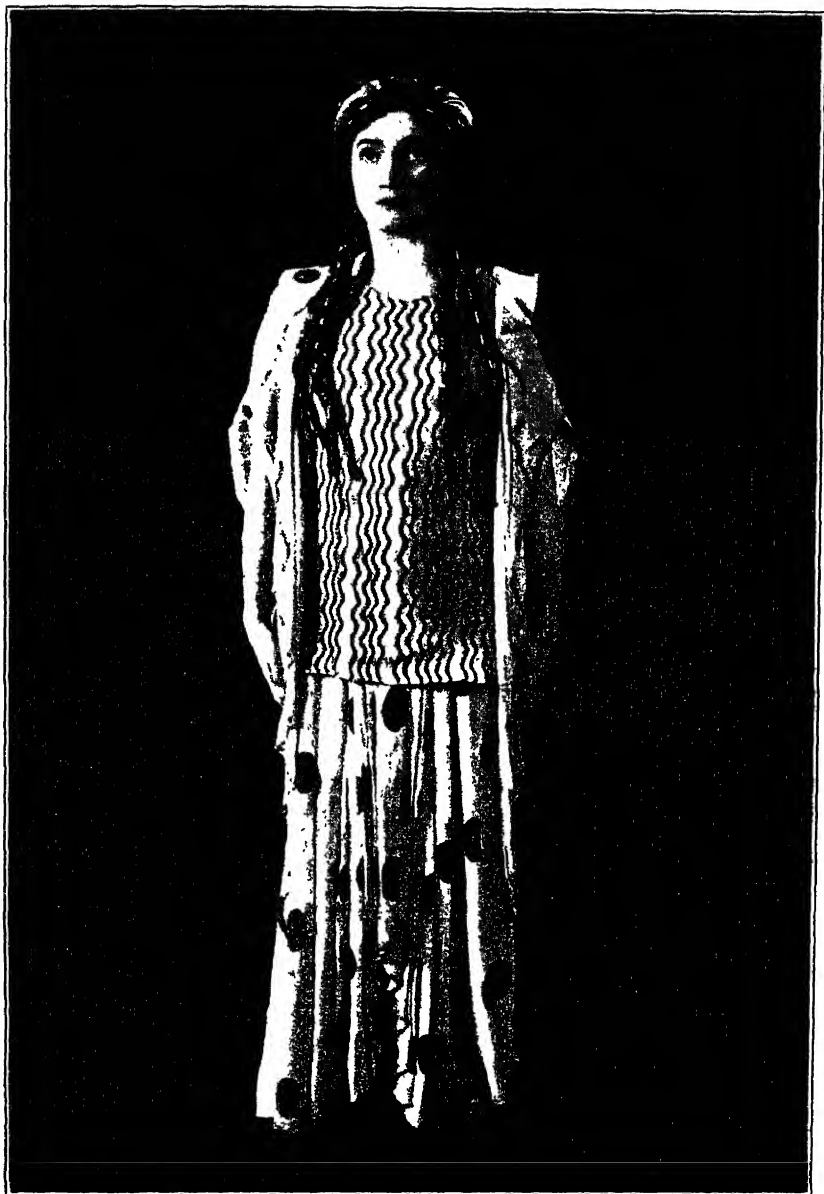
John Palmer, dramatic critic of the *Saturday Review* and a true artist with a rare comprehension of the theatre and of dramatic art, sent me encouragement:

"I should like to express to you privately my pleasure in 'Iphigenia.' As a public person I am writing about this production in the 'Saturday' this week—a very belated notice, I am afraid, but it is not easy for me to get away to an afternoon theatre. I enjoyed every one of your speaking moments last week; especially as, to be frank, your Jocasta of January last left me with something of a sense of disappointment. I am more than ever sure that you should absolutely refuse to act in another play of Ibsen or Shaw till you have shown us all what you can do in poetic drama, Greek or Shakespearean. I warn you solemnly that I shall not leave you alone in print till you have played Beatrice and Lady Macbeth. I don't care where you play them, so long as it is not in His Majesty's Theatre. I hope this letter does not strike you as impertinent from a young critic to a distinguished player who has done so much for our delight in this heathen city.

"Sincerely yours,

"John Palmer."

But of all the letters I received, the one which touched me most was from Miss Beddoe. It ran thus:



Photograph by Daily Mirror Studios.

LILLAH MCCARTHY AS "IPHIGENIA"
in "Iphigenia in Tauris," by Euripides, at The Kingsway Theatre in 1912
Design by Norman Wilkinson of Four Oaks.

“April 23rd.

“Miss Beddoe, an old lady who was present at the performance of ‘Iphigenia in Tauris’ on Friday, April 12th, wishes to thank Miss McCarthy and all the other performers for the great pleasure they gave her by their rendering of a noble play. It was a great treat to see the old virtues of love of country and kindred, friendship and reverence for the gods exemplified, and Miss Beddoe can only regret that the audience was not more numerous.

“Will Miss McCarthy please accept the enclosed P.O. for 10s., as a little sign of Miss Beddoe’s gratitude, with every good wish for her future success, and that of her fellow actors.”

The token which Miss Beddoe sent is among my most cherished possessions. Nothing would make me part with it, not even the daughters of the horse-leech singing in chorus with H.M. Inspectors of Income Tax the incessant demand-note “give, give” would wrest it from me. I have had, as every actress has had, gifts from admirers, but I would exchange them all for the enclosed postal order for 10s., a sign of Miss Beddoe’s gratitude: the Beddoe’s mite! I see the tears streaming from her eyes as Orestes and Iphigenia recognise one another. She is old and knows how hungry the world is for love. She loves her country and kindred, cherishes friendship and reveres reverence. She is grateful, and I am yet more grateful to her. I shall tell Euripides some day, and he will love Miss Beddoe as I love her. He will seek her among the shining choir and say to her: “It is goodness such as yours that inspired me to write the play.”

Then at last the opportunity came for which I had longed ever since I stood in the Greek theatre at Syracuse: the opportunity to do a Greek play in the open air in England. The Principal of the College asked me to play “Iphigenia” in the open-air theatre at Bradfield. I accepted joyfully, but before doing so,

I made a journey to Bradfield to see what sort of a theatre it was. I went down to Bradfield set among the green meadows and pastures of Berkshire. I found the theatre.

When I saw it—an old disused chalk pit—I was filled with admiration for the man who had had the inspiration to use Time for his architect; so picturesque it was and so ancient the theatre seemed. The grey, broken walls were overgrown with moss and overhung with ivy, grey pillars and grey seats rising up tier upon tier. I lifted my voice and it carried as though borne on the wings of the birds that fluttered overhead.

I hurried home, went to my room and began to rehearse my part. Iphigenia rebelled. She would not be rehearsed within those narrow walls. I must go into the open and there practise to speak her spacious words. I longed to go to the Cheltenham Hills where often, so long ago, my father's voice and mine had echoed. But Cheltenham was too far away, and so were the Hampstead and Highgate Hills. But there are steps at the Tate Gallery in London and thither I went.

I used to go every morning early and rehearse the lines whilst standing on the steps. It was as peaceful as the plains of Argos where Orestes and Iphigenia used to play. No one took any notice. A milk-cart clattered by and the driver turned and grinned and waved his whip. Sometimes a passer-by would approach; but finding, I suppose, that it was neither "down with the Government" nor a call to repentance, would shrug his shoulders and walk away. Surely London is still the politest city in the world.

I got used again to speaking in the open: learned again the art to pitch the voice higher over the top of the head than need be in the closed theatre, for, as all good actresses know, the head must be the resonator of the voice. A voice which seems to come from the throat and to issue from the mouth can never carry far nor impress much. Only those who learn to speak

as though the voice were coming from behind the head and from the head and from the eyes can use their voices well: a fact which Mussolini, among other orators of our time, has somehow learned. I have had to learn all I know of voice production by the slow and twisting road of experience, and knowledge got in that way, though it is the best of all knowledge for the learner, does not make a good teacher. Only those who, like Elsie Fogerty, have combined the arts of actress and student of voice production can teach the mechanism of it. She can. No one better. She may not be able to make the dumb speak, but she can make the inarticulate audible, and she can, by the power of her experience and knowledge of technique, make ugly voices pleasant, and those which are the worse for wear fresh again. But only too often people, clergymen, politicians, public men generally, come to us too late. Voice production is one of the things that should be taught in every school. As it is, we rub along somehow assuming that it is all right if we speak with the voice Nature has given us, when only too often it is all wrong because we have not learned how to use the voice She gave us. Mind and body seem to me as one. Shakespeare said so, "when the mind's sick the body's delicate," when the voice is thin there must be parts of the brain which are ill-nourished.

So there on the steps of the Tate Gallery, I used to let my voice go, throwing it at the milkman, and when I knew by the waving of his whip that my voice had reached him, I went home satisfied.

We gave three performances of "Iphigenia" at Bradfield: under blue skies to a full chalk pit. In that serene air, the exquisite lines seemed to fall like benedictions on the aspirations of mankind.

The beauty of the play, which I felt so deeply, was deeply felt by others also. The *Westminster Gazette* wrote:

"What remains in my mind—and what will long remain—is the vision of Lillah McCarthy stark

against the barbaric background and full of tragedy, descending into, as it were, the memory of the dead, pouring out those fine lines of Professor Gilbert Murray. Her performance was one of the unforgettable memories of a singularly eventful lifetime."

Many years after, in 1931, I played "Iphigenia" again in English open air. It was at Blenheim Palace in aid of the "English Verse Speaking Association," which was holding its annual Festival in Oxford. The Duke of Marlborough, whose genius for gracious hospitality captivates all who have enjoyed it, lent the terraces for the performance. Vanbrugh's palace, trying so hard to appear at once both stately and gay, formed a splendid drop-scene which the audience could admire whilst waiting for the play to begin, and the actors as they went upon the stage could look across the lake up the long avenue to the column which commemorates the first Duke. Before the play started, there was bright sunshine, but heavy clouds came out of the west. Thunder and rain were in the air. Both came. But before the rain fell, and fall it did in heavy showers, so they tell me, "Iphigenia" had begun. I suppose it did rain. They tell me that an anxious mother or two hurried away her children, but that the great crowd remained immobile throughout the performance, that they sheltered as best they might under a black canopy of umbrellas, with feet tucked up on the rails of the chairs, and stayed until the end; applause enough to fill the greediest heart! They came flocking around us afterwards, fearful lest we should all get colds. The Duchess would have us all take the hot baths which, with much forethought, she had ordered. But we were all hot enough already, rain notwithstanding, and had no fear of colds. The only cold that an actress ever takes is from the frigidity of audiences. Emotions such as she must feel if she is to impart them are in themselves hot baths. They keep her warm enough and impervious to draughts and damp

and change of temperature, otherwise no actors could live in the theatre. A leading part in a play worth acting is as good as ten Turkish baths.

The deluge, however, though it did not damp the ardour of audience or actor, did pour cold water on one of my most cherished aspirations—the building of an open-air theatre in London for the production of Greek plays. Not until people become once more hardened to weather, less timorous of rain and “*courants d’air*,” shall I dare try to secure fulfilment of this hope of mine.

“*Iphigenia*” is of happy omen to me: of all parts I have ever played—and they are many—hers most wins my heart. And so, when I was in America in 1915, I found occasion to produce “*Iphigenia*” there.

America enjoys advantages of climate, of auditorium and, dare I say, of audience, which are denied to us. The Universities have generally a great Stadium, which is as good for plays as it is for games. The Yale Bowl, for example, with its rising tiers of seats, can hold more than ten thousand people. I played “*Iphigenia*” there. The stage was in the centre of the Bowl. It was modelled after the stages of the ancient Greek amphitheatres, and made in sections so that it could be taken from place to place. Stage facing one end of the Stadium, behind it a cluster of tents for dressing-rooms, in front a great circular ground cloth, 100 feet in diameter, with the conventional altar in the centre. The background of the stage was of canvas, 100 feet wide and 40 feet high, with three doors. The acoustics were so perfect that there was no need to shout or strain the voice.

The people of the United States took an absorbing interest in the Greek plays. I played there my fourth Greek part, that of the tragic Hecuba in Euripides’ “*Trojan Women*.”

Paul Cravath, old and tried friend who contrives so perfectly to combine affection of England with devotion to America, helped the “cause” enthusiastically, passing us along from Yale to Harvard and Philadelphia, where

we acted the plays in the Botanic Gardens under the auspices of the University, to New York, where the performances were arranged by the City and Columbia University, and to Piping Rock outside New York City.

Sometimes, as was the case when we played in the Stadium at New York, 30,000 people came. If America can show such interest in Greek drama, why should not the British Universities combine to organise a Festival of Greek drama here? They have, or some of them, kept alive the language, why not help to restore the most precious part of it to the people whose heritage it is.

It seems to me that there is a noteworthy difference between Americans and English in their way of testifying to the beautiful things they love. If they like a play, for example, the Americans go to see it. The English, though they like it, often wait for a better one. And the better one never comes. Our intellectuals resign from ruling by being divided. Their ideals are at once so high and so peculiarly their own that they often find themselves unable to give countenance to the ideals of others like in kind but a little lower than their angelic ones.

Hecuba, in the "Trojan Women," unhappy Queen of Troy, mother of Hector, is the most tragic part that I have ever played. Everything conspired to heighten the tragedy. I, like Ruth, stood sick for home "amid the alien corn." The rehearsals themselves were all shivers, in an armoury, barn-like, in New York, cold and damp. I had no need to announce the grief and anguish which falls on Hecuba when, old and still a queen, blow after blow falls upon her, and messenger after messenger comes to tell of the tragedies which have befallen all those she loves. Hecuba's sorrows became my own, and out of my own gloom I was able to portray the darkness of life. How touched therefore I was to know that out of all these sorrows something more than sorrows comes. To come at last to understand that sorrowing for others and with



Photograph by Underwood and Underwood, New York.

LILLAH McCARTHY AS "HECUBA"
in "The Trojan Women," by Euripides, at the Stadium, New York, in 1915
Design by Norman Wilkinson of Four Oaks.

others is the noblest attribute of man, noble because it ennobles, and because it stirs and brings to life and to expression emotions which laughter can never touch. I set down with more than common gratitude two letters which reached me after these performances. Is it chance or of significance that both were written by women?

“June 2nd.

“As a member of the playgoing Com. of the Drama League, I had the pleasure of seeing the ‘Trojan Women’ last Saturday at the Stadium. I think I have never, during one play, been more exalted and deeply touched. The splendour of *Hecuba* and the human heart-breaking tragedy as shown in your development of the character, left me at the end crying Brava! through tears. It was a memorable performance, all the glory and sorrow of womankind from the time of Euripides through to-day was there, given us with equal sureness and beauty.

“I am deeply grateful to you, all America should be.

“Yours sincerely,

“(Mrs.) Mary Panton Roberts.”

“At the risk of seeming to intrude, I beg leave to submit an impression of Iphigenia in New Haven. Having seen Reinhardt’s production of the ‘Æschylus Orestes Trilogy’ in Munich as well as ‘Ædipus’ and ‘Antigone’ by Athenæan companies in Constantinople, I expected much. But I did not suspect what the day and your art had in store for me. First of all, there was the very present pleasure in the physical side of the production, intelligent and vital at every turn. If not scrupulously archæological, it was certainly a proper reincarnation of the adventurous *motif* of the play. And it accented a phase that we academic people too generally slight, the Oriental in the Greek, a phrase which a term of residence in

the Near East has impressed upon me. But there was far more in your play for us. Behind the subtle scene, beyond your voice, seemed to come glimpses of the Aegean as one sees it from the theatre of Dionysus, shining right up to the sky. The recognition of brother and sister was touched as with the preciousness of a longed-for, unhopèd-for meeting in the old days when all the world was barbarian, all the seas friendless. In the declaration that the gods delight not in man's blood was all the triumphant uprush of feeling that accompanied the launching of a thought which is in the end to be man's salvation. So your production, as no reading to the play could have done, gave us glimpses of the great Greek age.

"A few things I resented, like the music, which though graceful, seemed far too Western. And the blue and white striped stuff with the red diamond of the first herdsman seemed hardly worth while. But it is ungracious to criticise a performance which came as a very beautiful, very noble assurance, in this time when all the good things of life seem menaced, that the best things after all can never perish from the earth.

"Yours very sincerely,
"H. McA."

If these things are true: if these plays evoke feelings of which the whole earth stands in need, then surely in Heaven's name let us see to it that these plays are done in England. The people have to take what they are given. Where are the leaders to give them what should be given, what they most need, a conception of life which stretches far beyond this drab scene, which embraces eternal things, and living things, and things which every living soul can understand. I know that we are all ready for them.

Salisbury, Rhodesia, 1930. The classical master of Prince Edward's Boys' School, wrote to me on my arrival to ask me to read passages from "Ædipus" to

the boys. They were to give a performance of this tragedy of Sophocles at Government House. I went. Seven hundred boys and nearly as many girls from other schools. I read scenes from "Œdipus" and "Iphigenia." What a bore, the cynic says. No, no. Trust an actress to know whether she holds an audience. I held them. No, I did not, "Œdipus" and "Iphigenia" held them. The excitement and intensity of interest held those boys and girls; not a foot shuffled. This is the Empire I want to belong to, great not only in itself but great because it brings into its daily life the greatness of the past and uses it as well as its own sinews to build a yet greater future.

I used to help a girl in Salisbury (Rhodesia) to play Jocasta: she had great natural ability, fine diction and a lovely voice. "You will go on the stage," I said. "No, I have no chance. I am in an office." The Empire needs women in its offices but it needs them in what is to me, one of the highest offices of all, the acting of Greek plays.

The last time I played "Iphigenia" was yesterday (December 1932) at the Haymarket Theatre, London: again to help the "English Verse Speaking Association," and once again to hear the exquisite voice of Clifford Turner as Orestes speaking Euripides' lovely lines which have echoed through the hearts of homesick men down more than twenty centuries:

"And when thou art come to Hellas, and the plain
Of Argos, where the horsemen ride."

On my way to the theatre I met a friend: "What, back again acting?" he said. "Yes, Iphigenia," I replied. "That's Greek to me," he said, "but if you were only acting [I forget what] how I should love to see you." They always do, these friends of Job. They comfort you with something else than what you want. But I went on to the theatre. Packed house, the door-keeper said. Sold out, standing room only. It was so.

When Gilbert Murray appeared before the curtain he saw a sea of faces. He spoke of Greek drama, of the union of poetry and drama, of the power of the living voice to stir emotion. The play began. I have never felt such stillness in the theatre. Every one of us felt it and knew it for what it was: the sign of rapt attention. The lovely play, the greatest I think that was ever written, went on with its superb motion of increasing grandeur until the climax comes, the recognition of the sister and the brother, still no sound. All wondering what can happen to thwart the hand of fate which lies so heavy on these lost children of a stricken house. Then the gasp of relief to know that Euripides is stronger than the gods: to see him bringing them down to earth to remedy the evil they have wrought; and then the happy smile when at last it is quite sure that "Orestes" and "Iphigenia" are free again: are free at last. Where elsewhere in this world can happiness like this be found: happiness all purged of self because it arises from the happiness of others?

Much applause: but there was no need: attention such as that audience gave is all the applause the artist wants, though the woman behind the artist may take it gladly enough. The house emptied. I went home. The next day came a letter from Gilbert Murray. I give it:

"13th December, 1932.

"Dear Lillah,

"That was a most beautiful performance to-day and I fully share the enthusiasm of the audience. I am not sure that 'Iphigenia' is not your very best part. You gave it the long-sustained power and variety that it needs, as well as the fine speaking. I should have liked to come round afterwards, but I had some unfinished work to settle before going back to Oxford. But I wanted to talk to somebody in order to bubble over, so eventually I rang up Masefield in the evening, and we agreed what a world of

pities it is that you are not constantly doing Greek plays.

“Yours ever,
“Gilbert Murray.”

I give it because it shows me that I have not worked in vain. That the passion for acting that has filled my life, and still fills it, has helped, here and there—a little here, a little there—to show the loveliness of drama and of poetry. I hear the telephone bell. The quick voice of the girl says that time is up. I hear Gilbert and John say: “Not yet, not yet.” They go on talking, regardless of expense, saying to one another that some way must be found to get the drama of the Greeks into the life of English men and women. Their voices bring me a great happiness:

“Who is the happy warrior? Who is he
That every man in arms should wish to be?
It is the generous spirit who, when brought
Among the tasks of real life, hath wrought
Upon the plan that pleased his boyish thought. . . .

’Tis, finally, the man who, lifted high,
Conspicuous object in a nation’s eye,
Or left unthought of in obscurity,
Prosperous or adverse, to his wish or not,
Plays, in the many games of life, that one
Where what he most doth value must be won.”

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